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AMONG THE GUERILLAS.

BY

EDMUND KIRKE, *pseud.*

AUTHOR OF "AMONG THE PINES," "MY SOUTHERN FRIENDS,"
"DOWN IN TENNESSEE," "PATRIOT BOYS AND PRISON
PICTURES," ETC.



NEW YORK :
CARLETON, PUBLISHER, 413 BROADWAY,
M DCCC LXVI.

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TO

JAMES, THE YOUNGER.

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INTRODUCTION.

IT has become the fashion of late years to write the lives of great men for little boys. I propose to write the life of a little man for great boys,—for the million of “beardless sovereigns” who will wield a ballot for the first time at the next general election; and for the many millions of bearded freemen who have done that patriotic duty these many years, but whose education has not included a thorough course of instruction in regard to Southern men and Southern institutions,—a knowledge that just now seems of much importance in view of the great problem of Reconstruction which the American people are called upon to solve.

My little volume takes the form of a story; but my object is not so much to write a story as to draw a series of pictures of Southern life and Southern people in colors so simple and yet

so vivid as shall make the peculiar characteristics of the various classes of the South obvious to the most untutored understanding. This is my principal object ; but I shall be disappointed if I do not tell a tale that may interest the youngest reader, and, at the same time, afford food for reflection to the oldest and wisest head now exercising its thoughts on the great question before the nation.

The task seems a simple one, but I approach it with many misgivings ; for young manhood to me is a sacred thing, a grand possibility, an undeveloped power of almost unlimited good or unlimited evil. What if some careless word of mine should warp the growing good or rouse the slumbering evil ! I hope that it may not ; and in that hope I begin my story.

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AMONG THE GUERILLAS.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE BATTLE-GROUND.

AS I sit down to write by this bright, blazing fire, the clouds are scudding across the moon, and the wind is moaning around the old house, shaking the doors, and rattling the windows, and snapping the branches of the great trees outside as if a young tornado were cracking its whip in the court-yard. On just such a night a wounded boy lay out on the Wilderness battle-ground!

You have heard of that great battle; how two hundred thousand men met in a dense forest, and for two long days and nights, over wooded hills, and through tangled valleys, and deep, rocky ravines, surged against each other like angry waves in a storm. And you have heard, too,—what is very pitiful to hear,—how, when that bloody storm was over, and the sun came out, dim and cold, on the cheerless May morning which followed, thirty

thousand men lay dead and dying on that awful field. Amid such a host of dead and dying men, you might overlook one little boy, who, all that starless Friday night, lay there wounded in the Wilderness. I do not want you to overlook him, and therefore I am going to tell you his story.

He was a bright-eyed, fair-haired boy, the only son of his mother, who was a widow. He used to read at home of how boys had gone to the war, how they had been in the great battles, and how great generals had praised them; and he longed to go to the war too, and to do something to make himself as famous as the boy who fought on the Rapahannock. For a long time his mother was deaf to his entreaties, — and he would not go without her consent; but at last, when a friend of his father raised a company of hundred-days men in his native town, she let him join as a drummer-boy in the regiment.

The only battle he was in was the terrible one in the Wilderness. His regiment shared in the first day's fight, but he escaped unharmed; and all that night, though tired and hungry, went about in the woods carrying water to the wounded. The next morning he snatched a few hours' sleep, and that and a good breakfast refreshed him greatly. At

ten o'clock his regiment moved, and it kept moving and fighting all the day, until the sun went down; but, though a hundred of his comrades had fallen around him, he remained unhurt.

The shadows were deepening into darkness, and the night was hanging its lanterns up in the sky, when the weary men threw themselves on the ground to rest. Overcome with fatigue, he too lay down, and, giving one thought to his mother at home, and another to his Father in heaven, fell fast asleep. Suddenly the sharp rattle of musketry and the deafening roar of cannon sounded along the lines, and five thousand Rebels rushed out upon them. Surprised and panic-stricken, our men broke and fled; and, roused by the terrible uproar, James — that was his name — sprang to his feet, but only in time to catch in his arms his Captain, who was falling. He was shot through and through by a minie ball.

The boy laid him gently on the ground, took his head tenderly in his lap, and listened to the last words he had to send to his wife and children. Meanwhile, yelling like demons, the Rebels came on, and passed them. Then James could have escaped to the woods, but he would not leave his father's friend when he was dying.

Soon our men rallied, and in turn drove the enemy.

Slowly and sullenly the Rebels fell back to the little hill on which James and his friend were lying. There they made a stand, and for half an hour fought desperately, but were at last overborne and forced back again. As they were on the eve of retreating, a tall, ragged ruffian came up to James, and demanded the watch and money of the Captain.

"You will not rob a dying man?" said the boy, looking up to him imploringly.

"Wall, I woan't!" was the Rebel's brutal reply, as he aimed his bayonet straight at the Captain's heart.

By a quick, dexterous movement, James parried the blow; but, turning suddenly on the poor boy, the ruffian, with another thrust of his bayonet, ran him directly through the body. His head sunk back to the ground, and he fainted.

How long he lay there unconscious he does not know, but when he came to himself the moon had gone down, and the stars had disappeared, and thick, black clouds were filling all the sky. It did not rain, but the cold wind moaned among the trees, and chilled him through and through. He tried to rise, but a sharp pain came in his side, and for the first time he thought of his wound. Passing his hand to it, he found it clotted with blood. The cold air had stopped the bleeding, and thus saved his life.

Though the bayonet had gone clear through him, the hurt was not mortal, for no vital part was injured.

He thought of the Captain, and spoke his name ; but no answer came. Then he reached out his hand to find him. He was there, but his face was cold, — colder than the cold night that was about them. He was dead.

The wounded lay all around ; and all this while their cries and groans, as they called piteously for water, or moaned aloud in their agony, came to his ear, and went to his very soul. He had heard their cries the night before, as he crept about among them in the thick woods ; but then they had not sounded so sad, so pitiful, as now, and that night was not so cold, so dark, so cheerless as this was. Soon he knew the full extent of their agony. An intolerable thirst came upon him. Hot, melted lead seemed to run along his veins, and a burning heat, as of a fire of hot coals kindling in his side, almost consumed him. He cried out for help, but no help came, — for water, but still he thirsted. Then he prayed, — prayed to the Good Father, who he knew was looking pitifully down on him through the thick darkness, to come and help him.

And He came. He always comes to those who

ask for Him. Soon the clouds grew darker, the wind rose higher, and the rain—the cooling, soothing, grateful rain—poured down in torrents. It wet him through and through, but it eased his pain, cooled the fever in his blood, and he slept! In all that cold and pelting storm he slept!

It was broad day when he awoke. The sun was shining dimly through the thick masses of gray clouds which floated in the sky, but the wind had gone down, and the rain was over. The moans of the wounded still came to him; but they were not so frequent, nor so terrible, as they were the night before. Many had found relief from the rain, and many had ceased moaning forever.

He could not rise, but after long and painful effort he succeeded in turning over on his side. Then he had a view of the scene around him. He lay near the summit of a gentle hill; at whose base a little brook was flowing. At the north it was crowned with a dense growth of oaks and pines and cedar thickets, but at the south and west it sloped away into waving meadows and pleasant cornfields, already green with the opening beauty of spring. Beyond the meadows were other hills, and knolls, and rocky heights, all covered with an almost impenetrable forest; and there the hardest fighting of

those terrible days was done. A narrow road, bordered by a worm-fence, wound around the foot of the hill, and led to a large mansion standing half hidden in a grove of oaks and elms, not half a mile away. Before this mansion were pleasant lawns and gardens, and in its rear a score or more of little negro houses, whose whitewashed walls were gleaming in the sun. This was the plantation — so James afterwards learned — of Major Lucy, one of those men whose bad ambition brought the late dreadful war on our country.

The scene was very beautiful, and, looking at it, James forgot for a moment the darker picture, drawn in blood, on the grass around him. But there it was. Broken muskets, torn knapsacks, overturned caissons, wounded horses snorting in agony, and fair-haired boys and gray-haired men mangled and bleeding, — some piled in heaps, and some stretched out singly to die, — lay all over that green hillside! Here and there a crippled soldier was creeping about among the wounded, and, close by, a stalwart, gray-haired man, the blood dripping from his dangling sleeve, was wrapping a blue-eyed, pale-faced boy in his blanket. "Don't cry, Freddy," he said; "you sha'n't be cold! Your mother 'll soon be here!" But the boy gave no answer, for — he was dead!

"He don't hear you," said James. "He is n't cold now!"

"I 'm afraid he is, — he said he was. Oh! if his mother knew he was here! 't would break her heart, — break her heart!" moaned the man, still wrapping the blanket about the boy.

James closed his eyes to shut out the painful scene, and the thought of his own mother came to him. Would it not break *her* heart to know that he was wounded? to hear, perhaps, that he was dead? He must not die; for her sake, he must not die! ONE only could help him, and so he prayed. Again he prayed that the Good Father would come to him, and again the Good Father came.

"What is *ye* a-doin' yere, honey, — a little one loike ye?" asked a kind voice at his side.

He looked up. It was an old black woman, dressed in a faded woollen gown, a red and yellow turban, and a pair of flesh-colored stockings which Nature herself had given her. She was very short, almost as broad as she was long, and had a face as large round as the moon, — and it looked very much like the moon when shining through a black cloud; — for, though darker than midnight, it was all over light, — that kind of light which shines through the faces of good people.

"I am wounded ; I want water," said the boy, feebly.

"Ye shill hab it, honey," said the woman, giving him some from a bucket she had set on the ground.

"Give some to *my* lad," cried the man who sat by the dead boy ; "he's been crying for it all night, — all night ! Did n't you hear him ?"

"No, I did n't, massa. I hain't been yere more 'n a hour, and a tousand's a heap fur one ole 'ooman ter 'tend on," replied the negress, filling a gourd from the bucket, and going with it to the dead boy.

She stooped down and held the water to his lips, but in a moment started back, and cried out in a frightened way, — "He 'm dead ! *He* can't drink no more !"

"He isn't dead !" yelled the man, fiercely ; "he sha'n't die ! Give *me* the water, old woman."

With a trembling hand he tried to give it to his son. He held it to the boy's lips for a moment, then, dropping the gourd and sinking to the ground, cried out— "It 'll kill his mother, — kill his mother ! Oh ! oh !"

"He 'm better off, massa," said the woman, in a voice full of pity ; "he 'm whar he can drink foreber ob de bery water ob life."

"Go away, go away, old woman, — don't speak

to me!" moaned the man, throwing his arms around the body of the boy, and burying his face in the blanket he had wrapped about him.

Brushing her tears away with her apron, the woman turned to James, and said, — "Whar is ye hurted, honey? Leff aunty see."

The boy opened his jacket, and showed her his side. She could not see the wound, for the blood had glued his shirt, and even his waistcoat, to his body; but she said, kindly, — "Don't fret, honey. 'Tain't nuffin ter hurt, — it 'll soon be well. Ole Katy 'll borry a blanket or so frum some o' dese as is done dead, and git ye warm; and den, when shè 's gub'n a little more water ter de firsty ones, she 'll take a keer ob you, — she will, honey; so neber you f'ar."

She went away, but soon came again with the blankets, and wrapping two about him, and putting another under his head, said, — "Dar, honey, now you 'll be warm; and neber you keer ef ole Katy hab borry'd de blankets. Dey 'll neber want 'em darselvs; and she knows it 'll do dar bery souls good, eben whar dey is, ter know *you's* got 'em. So neber keer, and gwo ter sleep, — dat 's a good chile. Aunty 'll be yere agin in a jiffin."

James thanked the good woman, and, closing his eyes again, soon fell asleep. The sun was right over

his head, when old Katy awoke him, and said, —
“Now, honey, Aunty ’s ready now. She ’ll tote you
off ter de plantation, and hab you all well in less nur
no time, she will ; fur massa ’s ’way, and dar hain’t no
’un dar now ter say she sha’n’t.”

“You can’t carry me ; I ’m too heavy, Aunty,” said
James, making a faint effort to smile.

“Carry you ! Why, honey chile, ole Katy could
tote a big man, forty times so heaby as you is, ef dey
was only a hurted so bad as you.”

Taking him up, then, as if he had been a bag of
feathers, she laid his head over her shoulder, and
cuddling him close to her bosom, carried him off to
the large mansion he had seen in the distance.

CHAPTER II.

WOUNDED.

THE house to which the aged negress bore the wounded boy was a square, antiquated mansion, originally something in the fashion of the old farm-houses of New England. The hand of improvement, however, had been busy with it, until it had assumed the appearance of a country clown, who, above his own coarse brogans and homespun trousers, is wearing the stove-pipe hat, fancy waistcoat, and "long-tail blue" of some city gentleman. For a house, it had the oddest-looking face you ever saw. Its nose was a porch as ugly and prominent as the beak of President Tyler ; and its eyes were wide, sleepy windows, which seemed to leer at you in a half-comic, half-wicked way. One of its ears was a round protuberance, something like the pole "sugar-loaves" the Indians live in ; the other, a square box resembling the sentry-houses in which watchmen hive of stormy nights. Just above its nose, a narrow strip of weather-boarding answered for a forehead ; and right over this, a huge pigeon-coop rose up in the air like the top-knot

worn in pictures by that "old public functionary," Mr. Buchanan. The rim of its hat was a huge beam, apparently the keel of some ship gone to roost, and its crown a cupola, half carried away by a cannon-shot, and looking for all the world like a dilapidated beaver, which had been pelted by the storms of a dozen hard winters. The whole of its roof, in fact, looked like the hull of a vessel stove in amidships, and turned bottom upwards; and, with its truncated gables, reminded one of those down-east craft, which an old sea-captain used to tell me, when I was a boy, were built by the mile, and sawed off at the ends so as to suit any market.

But, notwithstanding these odd features, the old house had a most cosy and comfortable air about it. Great trees were growing before its door-way, and Virginia creepers and honeysuckles were clambering over its brown walls and wide windows, filling the yard with fragrance, and hiding with their blooming beauty at least one half of its grotesque ugliness.

Pausing to rest awhile on its door-step, old Katy entered the broad hall, and bore James into the "sugar-loaf" projection of which I have spoken. It was a little alcove built off from the library, and furnished with a few chairs, a wash-stand, and a low bed covered with a patchwork counterpane. On this

bed the old woman laid the wounded boy; and then, sinking into a chair, and wiping the perspiration from her face, said to him, "You 's little, honey, but you 's heaby, — right heaby fur sich a ole 'ooman ter tote as I is."

"I know I am, Aunty," said the boy, to whom the long walk had brought great pain, and who now began to feel deathly sick and faint. "You might as well have let me die there."

"Die, honey!" cried the old negress, springing to her feet as nimbly as if she had been a young girl; "you hain't a gwine ter die, — ole Katy woan't leff you do dat, nohow."

James looked at her with a weary, but grateful look, as, undoing his jacket and waistcoat, she wet his shirt with a dampened cloth, and tried to remove it from his wound. The long walk — old Katy's gait was a swaying movement, nearly as rough as a horse's trot — had set the wound to bleeding afresh, so the shirt came away without any trouble, and she saw the deep, wide gash in the boy's side. The bayonet had entered his body at the outer edge of the ribs, just above the hip, and, going clear through, had come out at his back, making a ghastly wound. It seemed all but impossible to keep the precious life from oozing away through such a frightful rent; but, cov-

ering it hastily with the cloth, the old woman said to James in a cheerful way: "'Tain't nuffin', honey, — nuffin' ter hurt. Ole Katy's seed a heap ob wuss ones nur dat; and dey's gwine 'bout now, as well as dey eber was. You'll be ober it right soon. But you muss keep quiet, honey, and not grebe nor worry after nuffin'; fur ef you does, de feber mought git in dar, and ef dat ar fire onct got ter burnin' right smart, dar's no tellin' but it might burn you right up, spite of all de water in de worle."

The pain of his wound did not prevent the boy from smiling at the idea of being put out like a house on fire; but he made no reply, and the old negress, gently drawing off his pantaloons and shoes, said again, in a cheerful tone: "Now, honey, keep bery quiet, and Aunty'll go fur de ice. Dar's plenty ob dat 'bout de house. She'll bind it on ter de hurt, till it'm so cold you'll tink you'm layin' out on de frosty ground right in de middle ob winter."

She went away, but soon returned with the ice. Binding it about his wound, she brushed the long hair from the boy's face; and then, bending down, kissed his forehead.

"You won't mind a pore ole brack 'ooman doin' dat, honey," she said. "She can't help it; case you lqoks jest like her own Robby, dat's loss and

gone,—loss and gone! Only he 'm a little more tanned nur you,—a little more tanned,—dat 's all."

"And you had a son!" said James, opening his eyes, and looking up pleasantly at the old woman; "I hope he is n't dead."

"No, he hain't dead honey,—not dead; but he 'm loss and gone,—loss and gone from ole Katy,—foreber! Oh! oh!" and the poor woman swayed her body back and forth on her chair, and moaned piteously.

"I 'm sorry,—very sorry, Aunty," said James, raising his hand to brush away his tears. "One so good as you should have no trouble."

"But I hain't good, honey; and you mussn't be sorry,—you mussn't be nuffin', only quiet, and gwo ter sleep. Ole Katy woan't talk no more." In a moment, however, she added: "Hab you a mudder, honey?"

"Yes, Aunty, and I 'm all she has in the world."

"And hab she eber teached you ter pray?"

"Yes. I pray every morning and night. You came to me because I prayed."

"I done dat, honey! De good Lord send me case you ax him, you may be shore! And, maybe, ef we ax him now, he 'll make you well. I knows young massa say 'tain't no use ter pray,—dat de Lord neber change, and do all his business arter fix' laws;

but I reckon one o' dem laws am dat we muss pray. I s'pose it clars away de tick clouds dat am 'tween us and de angels, so dey kin see whar we am, and what we wants, and come close down and holp us. And, honey, we 'll pray now, and maybe de good Lord will send de angels, and make you well."

Kneeling, then, on the floor by the side of the bed, she prayed to Him who is her Father and our Father, — her God and our God. It was a low, simple, humble prayer, but it reached the ear of Heaven, and brought the angels down.

It was eight days before James could sit up, and day and night, during all of that time, old Katy watched by him. Every few hours she changed the bandage, and bound fresh ice upon his wound; and that was all she did, — but it saved his life. The only danger was from inflammation, — the ice and a low diet kept that down, and his young and vigorous constitution did the rest. At the end of a fortnight, leaning on the arm of the old negress, he walked out into the garden and sat down in a little arbor, in full view of the recent battle-ground. It was a clear, mild morning in May, but a dark cloud overhung the little hill, as though the smoke of the great conflict had not yet cleared away, but, with all its tale of blood and horror, was still go-

ing up to heaven. And what a tale it was! Brothers butchered by brothers, fathers slaughtered by sons, and all to further the bad ambition of a few worthless men,—so few that one might count them on the fingers of his two hands!

“And what became of the wounded after the battle, Auntie?” asked James, as the sight of the grassy field, trodden down by many feet, and still reddened, here and there, with the blood of the slain, brought the awful scene all freshly to his mind. “You have n’t told me that.” (She had forbidden him to talk, for she knew that his recovery depended almost entirely on his being kept free from excitement.)

“The dead ones was buried, honey, and the wounded toted off by de graybacks, de evenin’ and mornin’ arter I-brung you away from dar. De Secesh hab de field, ye sees, at lass; and dey tuck all de Nordern folks as was leff, pris’ners.”

“And what became of the poor man who wanted water for his son? Do you know, Auntie?”

“When I was a gwine on de hill, arter you go asleep in de house, I seed him a wrappin’ up de little boy, and totein him off ter de woods. I ax him whar he wus gwine, and he look at me wid a strange, wild look, and say nuffin’, only, ‘Home—home.’ He look so bery wild, and so fierce loike,

dat I reckon he wus crazed, — clean gone. De lass I seed o' him, he wus gwine stret up Norf, — wid the little chile in his arms."

"Poor man!" exclaimed the boy. "How many have fared worse than I have!"

"A heap, honey. I knows a heap o' big folks wuss off nur eben ole Katy."

"And *you* say that, Auntie, — you, who are a slave, and have lost your —" He checked himself, for a look of pain came upon the face of the old negress. It was gone in a moment, and then, in a low, chanting tone, — broken and wild at times, but touching and sad, as the strange music of the far-off land she came from, — she told him something of what her life had been.

Her Robby, — her last one, — had been taken away, she said, to the hot fields, where the serpents sting, and the fevers breed, and the black man goes to die. All were gone, — all her children, — stolen, sold away, before they knew the Lord, or the good thing from the evil. Sold! because her master owed gambling debts, and her mistress loved the diamond toys that adorn the hair and deck the fingers! But one she begged, — the mother of the boy, — and she grew up pure as the snow before it leaves the clouds. Pure as the snow, but "young massa" came,

and the snow fell — down to the ground — soiled like the snow we tread on. She tired him then ; and he sold her to be a trader's thing. But the boy was left, — “young massa's” child, — the boy he promised her forever. She brought him up, taught him to read, and set the whole world by him. Then the troubles came, — the dark hour before the morning. She felt them in the air, and knew why all the storm was brewing. It broke her heart, but she sent him away to the Union lines, to grow up there a free man. The Northern general drove him back, and then — “young massa” sold him to work and starve and faint and die among the swamps of Georgia. And now — they all were gone ! All were lost, — but the Lord was left. He had heard her cry, — was coming now, with vengeance in his great right hand, to lift the lowly from the earth, and bring the mighty down.

Her last words were spoken with an energy that startled James. In his cold Northern home he had learned little of her warm Southern race, in whose veins a fire is slumbering which, if justice be not done them, will yet again set this nation ablaze.

The plantation, and old Katy too, belonged to Major Lucy, a prominent man in that part of Virginia, who, at its very outbreak, joined the great

Rebellion. He was away with Lee's army when Grant crossed the Rapidan, but he no sooner heard of that event than he repaired to his home, and removed his slaves and more valuable property to the far South. Old Katy he left behind, partly because she refused to go, and partly because he thought she might somewhat protect his house from the Northern soldiers, who, he supposed, would soon be in that region. For this reason the old negress was alone in the great mansion, and to this fact James owed his preservation; for, though her white owners might have given him hospitable care, they would not have shown him the devoted attention which she had, and that it was which saved his life.

While James was so very sick old Katy had slept in his little room, but now that he was out of all danger, and rapidly recovering, she made her bed in the large library leading from it; leaving, however, the door ajar at night, so she could at once hear the slightest sound. Every evening she took the great Bible from a shelf in this library, and read, generally from the Psalms, or Isaiah, — that poem grander than the *Iliad*, or any which poet yet has written; and one night, about a fortnight after they were first together in the garden, she read to him the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of that book, and then said: "Moab,

honey, am dis Southern land, dat am 'laid waste, and brought ter silence,' case it hab 'oppressed His people and turned away from His testimonies.' But de Lord say yere dat widin' free yars it shill be brought low, and its glory be contemned; and de remnant shill be bery small and feeble; but den dey shill take counsel, execute judgment, and let de outcasts dwell widin' dem."

"I hope it won't be three years, Aunty," said James. "That's an awful long while to wait."

"It 'pears long ter you, honey, but ole Katy hab waited a'most all har life,—eber sence she come ober in de slave-ship; and now all she ask ob de Lord am ter leff her see dat day. And she know he will! 'case he hab took har eberyting else,—eberyting,—eben har little Robby."

"No! He has n't, Granny! Robby's here, just as good as new."

Engaged as they were in conversation, they had not observed a comely lad, taller than James, who a moment before had entered the room. As he spoke, old Katy sprang to her feet, let the Bible fall to the floor, and, with a wild cry, threw her arms about him.

CHAPTER III.

PRISONERS.

THE new-comer was a lad of not more than eighteen ; with a clear, olive skin, glossy black hair, a lithe, well-knit frame, and straight, European features. He wore a tattered hat, untanned brogans, and motley uniform of gray and brown, badly torn and out at the knees and elbows ; but, though so meanly clad, there was about him that indefinable something which denotes good-breeding, and which showed that his blood had flowed in the veins of half a dozen manly ancestors.

When her first outburst of joy was over, the old negress plied the quadroon boy with questions : “ Whar did you come from, Robby ? How did you git yere ? ” she said.

It was the oft-told tale ; two hundred years old, and yet new only yesterday ; but never again to be told in this free country.

When sold away by his father, rather more than a year before, Robby was taken to a rice plantation not far from Savannah. There, though unused to any

but the lightest labor, he was set at work in the wet fields, and given tasks altogether unsuited to one of his strength. His condition was very desolate, for he was without friends, and many weary miles away from his home and his grandmother; but the good old woman had taught him to pray, and every morning and evening, and often at midday, leaning on his hoe in the hot sun, he would lay his hard lot before the Great Father. This gave him hope and comfort; for at such times he would fancy he heard voices all about him,—voices of the good spirits that people the air, and live in the bright heavens above us, bidding him be strong, and of good courage, for deliverance was coming. This to us is idle superstition, but to the slave boy the voices were real; and so they have been to thousands of his race. Toiling in the rice-field, stretched upon the whipping-rack, and standing on the auction-block, they have thought they heard them, sounding in their hearts as if they were the very echoes of heaven.

But whether the voices were real or not, they gave the slave boy strength to do his work, and bear his burdens. Yet days, and weeks, and months went by, and no help came; and his fare grew worse, and his tasks harder. At last his strength and health gave way, and he lagged behind in hoeing his row;

9 real to 100
8

and finally, one day, fell down in the field exhausted. His hot flesh and glazing eye told that the fever was on him ; but the brutal overseer ordered him to the whipping-post, and there, his arms drawn above his head, and his feet tied to the stake, his back was ploughed with the terrible lashes. Nature could not hold out, and he was taken down, insensible and delirious.

The next he remembered was being in a pleasant room in the great mansion. The good mistress, hearing of his illness, had ordered him conveyed there ; and there he was cared for until he recovered. Then, one day, his young master came home from the army, wounded. Robby was set to attend on him ; and when the young man rejoined his regiment, the slave boy was taken along as his body-servant. So it came about that he was again in Virginia. He had been in all the recent battles and marches, and once was only four miles from the mansion ; but no opportunity had occurred of his escaping, till a few days before. Then, in a night attack on his regiment, he stole off in the darkness, and, though forty miles away, managed, by hiding in the houses of friendly blacks by day, and travelling only at night, to get back to his grandmother.

“ De good Lord guided you, honey, you may be

shore," said old Katy, when the slave boy finished his story : "De whippin' was de bery ting fur you ; and so it am allers, — what 'pears de bery wuss, and de hardest ter bar, am de bery best, and jest what we can't git 'long widout, no how. De good Lord, he know dat ! He 'm allers de kindest, when he seem de mos' cruel ; and allers de nighest, when he seem de furdereest way off."

The two boys soon became fast friends. After a while, the wound of James healed, and he could walk about ; but it was a long while before he regained his full strength. This detained him at the plantation, and with Robert he roamed the woods and hills around the old mansion, and soon became so attached to the slave boy, that he urged him and old Katy to go with him to his home in Ohio. At first the old negress refused ; but when she saw her grandson's anxiety to go, she consented.

But it was a hard struggle to her. Though the old plantation had been the scene of untold sorrow to herself and her children, she clung to it as if it were a snug corner of the garden of Eden. And so it is with all of her race. The poorest plantation slave, whose life is only one round of hopeless days and weary nights, loves his mean hut of logs, with its earth floor, and wretched patch of corn and col-

lards, more than we love our comfortable homes, and all their cheerful surroundings. Those who would tear him from this rude home, and plant him in some new and strange country, are his worst enemies. He cannot bear removal. The graceful elm will grow in any soil; but the scraggy oak strikes its roots deep in the earth, and, nine times out of ten, dies when transplanted. So would it be with the black man.

May had rolled away into June, and June had gone with all the other Junes before James was really strong, and old Katy fully prepared for the long journey. She at last got together a few clothes and a small store of provisions, and was about ready to set out, but then an event occurred which frustrated her plans, and threw upon her meek shoulders a heavier load than any which even they had yet been strengthened to bear.

Towards the close of a beautiful day late in July, the clattering of hoofs was heard in the court-yard of the old mansion, and, going hastily to the windows, old Katy and her companions saw a score or more of cavalymen, in great slouched hats, and blue uniforms, dismounting near the doorway.

"Hurrah!" shouted James, as he caught sight of the glorious color which drapes the sky in beauty,

and lends the hue of heaven to even the wretched stuff made by the shoddy mills; "they are our own men, — Ohio boys! Hurrah!"

"No, honey," said old Katy, dejectedly, after a long pause, and a long look at the strange soldiery, "dey 'm Mosby's men! Run, Robby, — ter the corn-crib! Run! Dey 'm arter *you*! Hide away in de loft till dey 'm gone! Granny 'll fotch you suffin' ter eat. Ef she can't, — lib on de corn! Run!"

"Blood," it is said, "is thicker than water"; and, in her anxiety for the last of her kin, old Katy may have forgotten the danger to the friendless Union lad at her side; and who can blame her if she did forget it? What had she ever received from any of his race, that should make her in such a moment think of him?

Robby darted away, but not a second too soon; for as he disappeared from the room, the library door swung open, and a dozen tall, bearded men, in rusty regimentals and mud-incrusted cavalry-boots, with great spurs jangling at their heels, and heavy sword-blades clanking on the floor at their every step, entered the room.

Quarters and supper; quick, old woman!" cried the leader, throwing himself into a chair, and tossing his hat upon the centre-table. "We 're almost starved."

"We 'se nuffin', — nuffin' fur sich gemmen as you is," said old Katy, with something of an emphasis on the last words.

"You lie, you black Venus. Get us supper at once, or we 'll make a meal of *you*!" said the cavalryman, striking his sword a heavy blow on the floor.

With no manifestation of alarm the old woman quietly said there was nothing in the house except a little corn and a little jerked beef; but if the trooper's delicate palate could relish such viands, he was welcome to them. With a loud oath he cried out, "Hurry it up, hurry it up; any fare will do for starving men."

James meanwhile had slunk away into his little room, where he hoped to remain unobserved; but when the meal was about over, he heard the voice of the leader calling out: "Where is the little fellow in blue? Bring him out, I want to see him."

Old Katy gave no answer; but, knowing concealment to be impossible, James stepped boldly forward, and said: "I am here, sir."

"You are not Major Lucy's son, — who are you?" asked the trooper.

"I'm an Ohio boy, sir," replied James, coolly but respectfully.

"An Ohio boy!" shouted the officer, bringing his hand down heavily upon the table. "A young Yankee whelp?"

"I am a Yankee, sir,—not a whelp. In Ohio we think none are dogs but traitors," answered the lad, the angry blood mounting to his face, and his voice ringing out clear and strong as the notes of a bugle.

Amazed by the boldness of the boy, the trooper dropped his fork, and said, in a milder tone: "You're an impudent young devil. But—do you know what we do with Yankee boys out here?"

"Yes, sir. Some you shoot down from behind fences,—some you hang after they surrender; but you never whip us in a fair fight, unless you are two to our one."

Springing to his feet and grasping the boy by the arm, the trooper pulled him upon his knee, saying as he did so: "You're the bravest little fellow I ever knew. You're worth any two men in my company. You must enlist with me."

"'List wid you, Cap'n Thompson!" cried old Katy, who had listened with breathless interest to the conversation. "And you had a mudder, Cap'n, and you wus a little boy onct jess like him! 'List wid you!"

"And why not, Aunty?" said the Captain, apparently surprised at the old woman's recognition. "If I had a regiment of such boys, I'd drive Grant into the Potomac.

"But you can't mean to tuck him, Cap'n! He hab a mudder, — a pore, lone mudder, and he'm jess agwine ter har, Cap'n, — jess agwine ter har, and she 'm jess a spectin' him, case he hab jess wrote ter her. I 'se been a nussin' him all o' dis time fur dat, — eber sence de big battle, when he was hurted so bad; you can't mean ter tuck him wid you, Cap'n, — you can't mean dat!"

"I do mean that, so you shut up, old woman, and bring in some blankets for the men. The boy and I will sleep in this bed."

Remonstrance and entreaty, she saw, would be alike unavailing, and, with a heavy heart, old Katy set about preparing quarters for the soldiers. Two of them were to mount guard in the court-yard; half a dozen to "camp out" in the barns; and the remainder to sleep on the floor in the library. This disposition of his men the officer preferred to their distribution in the beds about the house, because it would enable them to act together in case of attack; and of that there was some danger, for even at that distance from Grant's army, small

parties of Union troops occasionally appeared in pursuit of forage or the numerous bands of guerrillas that hung about our lines of communication.

The men, in ransacking the house, having come upon some bottles of whiskey, a huge tankard of hot punch was soon steaming on the centre-table, and then began a scene of wild debauch such as James, in his short experience of camp life, had never witnessed. In the midst of it, the sergeant of the squad and another soldier entered the room, bearing between them a huge sack, which kicked and struggled as if it held a young alligator. Tossing it lightly upon a lounge in the corner, the Sergeant said to the Captain, "I say, Cap'n, I say, what ar' the value uv corn in the cob?"

"About twice what you 'll get for it," answered the Captain, without turning round. "I tell you again, if you touch anything of the Major's except his whiskey, I 'll break your heads."

"But this ar' whiskey, — the sort thet's good ter take," replied the Sergeant, laughing, and giving the bag a gentle kick.

There was a slight movement among the corn, and a low, stifled scream from old Katy, as the Captain grasped the bag by the neck, and drew Robby out upon the floor, his black hair powdered with flour,

and his olive complexion whiter than that of the ghost in Hamlet. But his face was not white with fear. His black eyes glowered on the Captain with the look of a wild beast about to spring on its prey. All the fierce passions of his race seemed to be awake within him. Perhaps he saw again the deadly rice-swamp, perhaps felt again the terrible lashes ; and would rather die than go back, — but would die wreaking vengeance on his enemies. This may or may not have been the cause of his emotion ; but some terrible passion flashed from his eyes, and glowed on his every feature. The Captain saw it, for he shouted as he caught the glance of the boy, “Bracelets, bracelets here for this young hyena !”

It took the united strength of two men to handcuff the boy ; but when he was finally secured, the Captain said, in a tone of more respect than he was accustomed to show to slave people : “Well, my young cub, who are you ?”

The boy gave him a defiant look, but made no answer ; old Katy, however, who all this while had stood by, apparently stupified by the great calamity which had befallen her, cried out, falling at his feet, and clasping his knees : —

“He ’m my chile, Cap’n, — Massa Robby’s chile, — poor Hannah’s chile, — dat you bought away from

young Massa, so many years ago! O, doan't you tuck him, Cap'n; doan't you,—he'm all I'm got, all I'm got."

The words came thick and husky; they seemed to wellnigh strangle the old woman; and, bending down, she wept convulsively.

She may have touched some painful chord in the Captain's memory, or his frequent potations may have mellowed his nature; whichever it was, his voice had a strange softness as he said, "I might have known it! He has her face, and her eye,—and what an eye!"

"O, save him, Cap'n. Doan't you tuck him away, he'm all I'm got!" again cried the old negress, encouraged by the altered tone of the trooper.

"Who does he belong to?" he asked, lifting her somewhat tenderly from the floor.

"Not ter massa,—massa sole him down ter Georgy, ter de rice-swamps; but he'm got away, and O Cap'n! doan't you, doan't you leff dem tote him dar agin!"

"Sold him to the rice-swamps! His own blood; and he a white man!" said the trooper. Turning then to his men, he added, "Boys, he has no owner—that we know of, so he belongs to us. What will you take for your share of him?"

"We doan't know, Cap'n," answered the Sergeant,

who had captured the corn, "Nigs is sca'ce ; we hain't kotched 'nuff o' late ter pay fur the drinks ; and he's a loikely boy. I reckon he's wuth two thousand."

"Two thousand ! He is n't worth two hundred. He has legs and knows it."

"I reckon !" said the Sergeant, laughing ; "an' bein's he's got legs, an' ye wants him, we'll say fifteen hundred."

The Captain turned away, with an angry gesture, and then said to old Katy in a low tone, "I have n't so much money in the world. I can't help you, Auntie."

"O, you kin, Cap'n !" she cried, sinking again to the floor. "You's only ter say de word, — dey muss mine *you*. O, say it, Cap'n, — say it ! and de Lord will bress you."

"I can't, — only the Colonel can say it. I'll make him, if I can."

"You can't, Cap'n. You hain't de chile's mud-der ! O, leff me gwo ter de Cunnel ! He'll do it, ef *I* ax him."

"He'd only laugh at you, Auntie. If *I* can't make him, nobody can. I'll try." Resuming then his usual manner, he added, "Now, go. We want to turn in."

As old Katy left the room, the trooper filled a glass

brimming full with the punch, and gulping it down with an unsteady hand, turned to the slave boy, who all this while had looked on, an apparently indifferent spectator of the scene. Scanning him for a moment from head to foot, he said:—

“I don’t like to see your mother’s son tied in that fashion. She was the truest woman that ever lived. Her word given, she would have died sooner than break it. Will you get away, if I take off the bracelets?”

“No, not to-night,” answered the boy.

“Some of you, take them off,” said the Captain. “Now, men, turn in”;—and soon all in the room were locked in that deep slumber which, like the blessed rain, falls on the just and the unjust,—all but the slave boy. He lay awake revolving plans which many of his race, maddened by wrongs like his, have, ere now, wrought out into action.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HOUSE IN THE WOODS.

I SHALL not attempt to describe the parting between the slave boy and his grandmother on the following morning. Seated on the doorstep of the mansion, her hands clasped across her knees, her eyes streaming with tears, the aged negress gazed after the departing rangers as they wound slowly down the road, as if her last earthly hope was going with them. But one of them lingered behind, and now approached her. It was the Captain.

"Don't feel so badly, Aunty," he said. "I loved that boy's mother: I caused her death; but I loved her as if she had been my wife. I will do all I can to get him free."

Old Katy turned her eyes to his face; and then said: "De Lord yeres you, Cap'n Thompson! As you 'spect mercy in de great day, keep you' word!"

"I will. Let God deal with me as I deal with him."

Instinctively he uncovered his head as he said this, and then, putting spurs to his horse, rode rapidly after his men.

The road taken by the rangers was at first a mere bridle-path, which picked its tangled way over rocks and stumps at the back of the mansion, but soon emerged into a broad thoroughfare, winding along over high hills and level plains dotted here and there with blossoming orchards, pleasant mansions, and little clusters of negro-houses, and covered everywhere with waving fields of wheat and corn, all clad in the beautiful garments of summer. Beyond this open country were dense forests and rocky heights; and far away to the westward the landscape faded into long mountain ranges, on which the clouds, not yet aroused from their morning nap, were sleeping peacefully in the sun.

Pausing on the summit of one of the nearest hills, the Captain halted his troop, and, drawing out a field-glass, took a long survey of the horizon. Turning then to one of his men, he said, "Are you sure we're on the right road?"

"Shore, Cap'n," answered the man. "Clap yer eye ter the glass ag'in, and look over yon patch o' timber. Look sharp, and ye'll see the sign: 'Hosses shod, and cattle farrid, by Miles Holley, veteran surgeon.'"

"Your eyes are good!" rejoined Thompson, "perhaps you can see the camp."

"P'raps I mought, with yer glass," answered the man, dryly.

The Captain handed him the instrument, and the other took a long sweep with it to the westward. "Do you see it?" asked the trooper, after a while.

"See it! In course I does,—with one o' these things I could see the man in the moon. Clap yer own eye to 't onct more, Cap'n, and look squar inter that cloud ag'in the sky, and tell me ef ye don't see the Cunnel's tent, all dressed out in pine sprigs and laurel leaves, like a meetin'-house at Christmas; and I reckon it mought pass fur a meetin'-house toll'able easy, fur a serious-minded man could yere more Scriptur' thar nur anywhar in creation."

"It *is* a saintly place," rejoined the Captain, laughing, and beginning to realize that the man was playing upon him; "but I don't see it. How far away may it be?"

"Twenty-five miles as the crow flies,—thirty by the road we 've got to travel."

"Well, your eyes *are* good! Perhaps you can see the Colonel himself."

"P'raps I mought,—let me try ag'in," answered the man.

The Captain again gave him the instrument, and, imitating his gesture, the man swept it along the

horizon, looking first in the direction of the camp, but letting it rest much longer over the blacksmith's shop.

"Do you see him?" asked the officer.

"See him!" echoed the other, removing the glass from his eye; "ye mought as well s'pect ter see a honest man in a bushwhacker's boots, as the Cunnel in sech a fixin' as this ar'. My eyes did n't cost half so much as the blasted thing, but I would n't swop 'em for forty on it."

"How far away is the blacksmith's?"

"It mought be six mile over the tree-tops, — it 'r eight as the road runs. Ye 'd better make it fifty."

"Why fifty?"

"To git thar arter dark. Old foxes don't sleep in the daytime."

"But I reckon twenty men can take him, if he does happen to be awake."

"Not if he eyes ye a-comin'. Ye 'd better halt till sundown. He moughtent see ye arter dark, for he hain't no glass like yourn."

There was good sense in the counsel of the soldier; and, directing him to lead the way to a secluded camping-ground, the Captain turned his horse, and followed him into a narrow opening in the timber.

The guide was a young man, apparently not more than twenty, and, though wearing, like the others, the uniform of a private soldier, had a look of superior intelligence. The badinage he had used in addressing the Captain was evidently assumed; for beneath his careless exterior there was an earnestness almost amounting to anxiety, which would not have escaped the notice of a close observer. But the Captain was absorbed in memories awakened by the capture of the slave boy, and this circumstance escaped his attention.

They had entered a narrow bridle-path, when, suddenly clapping spurs to his horse, the guide rode rapidly forward. He was fast disappearing among the trees, when the officer shouted, in a voice that made the woods ring: "Halt! halt! or I'll put a bullet through you!" The man was not out of range, and, drawing up his horse, he waited until the Captain came up with him.

"You ride as if you meant to get *somewhere* before sundown," said the Captain. "Let me tell you, my man, to mind, or you'll have an ounce of cold lead for dinner."

"Ye allers ride at that gait," answered the man, sulkily. "Ye kin go as slow as ye loikes when ye gits to the camp-ground."

"And where may that be?"

"Wharsomever ye loikes, —right in the high-road, —thar 's no use layin' low ef ye hollers in that fashion."

"Come, my fine fellow, keep a civil tongue in your head," said the Captain, tapping the handle of his pistol. "I've not known you long enough to trust you far out of sight."

"When ye know me better, ye 'll larn I'm as good a Reb as ye is. I stand by my State and my friends —ter the death," answered the man, looking the officer squarely in the face.

"Well ; I reckon you 're all right. I know you volunteered ; and that ought to be proof of it. But where do you propose to take us?"

"About the half o' three miles inter the timber. The nags 'll want water, and thar's a spring thar," said the man. "It's a clarin' ; with a 'ooman, and a short dozen o' tow-head chillen ; but I reckon they won't do us no hurt, if we keeps an eye on 'em."

"You seem to know this region," responded the Captain.

"I orter," said the man. "I use' ter work along o' old Miles. I reckon thet's how the Cunnel come ter send me ter guide ye."

"O yes ! I see," said the trooper ; "well, push on."

The soldier led the way at a slower pace, and in a

short half-hour they were at the clearing. It was a half-dozen acres of unfenced land, planted in corn and potatoes, and surrounded by a dense forest of oak, pine, and hickory, among which a thick underbrush was growing. In the centre of the opening, and about two hundred yards from the narrow bridle-path, by which the troop had come, was a small cabin of half-decayed logs, with a clay chimney, going up on the outside ; and a plank roof, made tight by a coating of pine leaves, held down by rope-strands interlaced between the timbers. A small rivulet, fed by the spring of which the guide had spoken, and a freckled-faced woman and four or five wretched looking children, seemed the only moving things about the premises ; but James thought he saw, as they approached, a suit of brownish butternuts gliding away among the underbrush. The woman, who was clad in a gown of worn homespun, and the children, who were scarcely clad at all, were hoeing among the corn and potatoes. They must have heard the tramp of the horses before the troopers emerged from the forest ; but they scarcely looked up until the Captain said in a free, cordial way, " My good woman, we have stopped to rid you of some of your waste water ; you seem to have a plenty of it."

" Ye 's welcome ter it," answered the woman, paus-

ing in her work, and turning to the officer. Her dull, stolid face brightened up at the sight of his uniform; and she added, in a more hearty, assured tone, "Ye's *very* welcome, — welcome ter all we has; it hain't much, but I loikes yer colors.

"That shows you're a woman of sense," replied the trooper, jocosely; "but we'll rob you of nothing but a little water for our horses, and a little fire for our dinners. Those seem about the only things you have to spare."

"We is pore, sir; but pore folks hain't no showin' in this kentry. I yere they has in yourn," responded the woman, mistaking the stolen blue of the Rebels for the true blue of the Yankees.

"O yes," said the Captain, keeping up the deception. "We give every poor couple a farm and a feather-bed; and every second boy has a chance to be President."

"I never yered o' thet," answered the woman, with an incredulous smile. "Ef it'r so, 't would do fur us ter live thar, for we hes five, sayin' nothin' uv John; and he's the biggest boy among 'em."

"And John is your husband? Is he in the Union army?"

"No; he war cornscripted by the Rebs, but he got away. They kotched him, and come nigh ter

a-hangin' on him ; but, finarly, as they wanted men, they let him off with a brandin'. They did n't make much out o' thet, for he's away ag'in ; but they won't kotch him this time, — he'll die fust."

"Where is he now?" asked the officer, in a quick, changed voice.

"I — doan't know — not exactly — but he hain't more'n a hundred mile from yere."

"Don't he help you about the place? You can't have planted and hoed all this corn."

"No. I hain't; the chillen has holped some; and John, too, when thar war n't no goorillas round. When thar was he's laid out in the timber."

"And he's in the timber now?" asked the Captain, with increasing interest.

The woman was about to answer, when she caught a glance of the guide, which forced her words back unspoken. The latter had gone with the rest of the troop to the spring to water the horses; and now, returning dismounted, said to the officer, "Hain't ye a-gwine ter post pickets, Cap'n?" The Yankees mought come enter us."

With a great oath the Captain cried out in a rage: "A moment more, and I'd have had this woman's husband. He's an infernal traitor."

The guidé made no reply; but the woman said, in

a tone of keen, cutting scorn, "He's nary traitor, — he's a honest man, — but I reckon them as gits inter a false coat ter trap pore wimmin ter betray thar husbands, ar wus nur traitors, — they's mean 'nuff ter trade in niggers."

Without answering a word the Captain rode off towards the spring.

James and Robert had ridden from the mansion behind two of the troopers, and, dismounting when the cavalcade first halted, had stood near the Captain during the whole of this interview. They were following him towards the spring, when they heard the woman say to the guide: "So, this ar what yer state-rights has brung ye ter — a murderin' honest folks in the cloes o' yer kentry!"

"No hard words, Ruth," answered the guide; "I'm doin' what I think's right; John hain't doin' no more. But, I've jest done ye a good turn, and I wants ye ter do me another."

"What ar it?" asked the woman, in a softened tone, her face brightening. "I'll do ye ar'ythin' I kin."

"We're arter old Miles, — we'll be thar by sun-down, — he must know we're a comin'."

"I understand, — John 'll do it, — God bless ye, Jake! Ye hain't half so bad as I thort ye."

The last words were spoken in low, guarded tones ; but the keen ear of the slave boy caught them distinctly, as with James he walked on towards the spring. The troopers had removed their animals to the shade of the wood ; and the Captain was watering his horse alone at the little rivulet when the two prisoners approached him. "What did they say to each other?" he asked them.

"She taunted him with fighting against his country," answered James, looking the Rebel steadily in the face.

"Is that all?" asked the Captain ; who more than half suspected that the guide's suggestion about the pickets was intended to give warning to the woman.

"All that I heard," replied the boy, and he spoke truly ; but Robert had already told him the remainder.

"Did *you* hear anything more?" asked the trooper, turning to Robert.

"If I did, I should not tell *you*," answered the slave boy, his lip trembling with some strange emotion.

The trooper's face flushed ; but he said, coolly, "Be careful, boy. I promised your grandmother to stand by you, and I shall. But do not anger me. I am your best friend."

"My friend!" cried Robert, his lip now quivering as you have seen the magnetic needle when overshadowed by a thunder-cloud. "You killed my mother!"

The trooper's face grew suddenly pale, and in broken words he said: "What do you know about your mother?"

"I know you owned her, and stole away her children as fast as they were born; and when she began to love the little good that is in you, you broke her heart by selling her to a wretched trader, to be—you know what. I knew all this the moment I saw your face, Robert Thompson!"

Some remorseful memories must have crowded on the trooper's brain; for he grew even paler, and his lip twitched convulsively, as he said: "I did her wrong; I would undo what I can of it by befriending you."

Robert made a step or two forward, and his face took on a fierce look, as he answered: "You can't undo it. I'd take nothing at your hands, but—your life. That I'd have now, if I had a weapon!"

These words, spoken in a tone which sent a shiver through the white boy, seemed to recall the trooper to himself. With more of his usual manner, he

said: "Boy, to-night, when we are at the blacksmith's, you slip away; and—never let me see you again."

"I shall go when I can; but not at your bidding," answered Robert, turning on his heel, and walking away as if he were playing a part in some blood and thunder drama.

The Captain made no reply; but as James turned to follow the slave boy, he said to him: "My boy, say nothing of this, and to-night get him away; you may go yourself, if you will."

"I will try to, sir," answered James.

As they went on towards the edge of the woods, the Captain suddenly laid his hand on the boy's shoulder, and, fixing on him a strange look, said: "*I* was once just such a brave, innocent boy as you are."

"And what made you do wrong?" asked the boy, looking up in the man's face.

"Drink,—cursed drink. If I'd been sober, I'd never have sold his mother."

"But you sold the children?" said James, in a hesitating way.

"No, no, I did not! I sent them North, gave them all I had; and that made me too poor to buy her back."

"I'm sorry, very sorry," said the boy. "I hope you'll not always feel so badly as you do now."

For a moment a look of pain came on the trooper's face ; it was gone soon, and then he said, in his usual way, "Let us say no more about it. Get him away to-night, — don't fail."

CHAPTER V.

THE CAPTAIN'S STORY.

PICKETS being stationed up and down the road to guard against surprise, the troopers gathered in little knots among the trees, and whiled the time away in card-playing, quoit-pitching, and other equally elevating and useful employments. Robert sat in the midst of one of the groups, looking vacantly on at the players; and the Captain walked apart, seemingly unconscious of what was passing around him.

He was a man of about forty, above the medium height, with a closely knit, sinewy frame, an erect, easy carriage, and the air of one accustomed to a life much above the one he was living. His face was deeply furrowed with dissipation, and his hair thickly streaked with gray; but his large, roving eye was what held the attention of the white boy, who sat near by on the trunk of a fallen tree. It moved about with a restless, uneasy motion, — now sinking back into itself, like an expiring flame, and now blazing up, as you have seen a black coal when fanned by the wind. Some dark history, writ-

ten on the man's soul, was flashing out in the changing light of his eyes, —telling the boy that "they who sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind," — they who commit crime shall feel retribution.

For a full hour the man walked thus, in silence; then he came and sat down by the boy, on the trunk of the fallen tree. After a while he said: "Have you a mother, boy?"

"Yes," answered James, "at home in Ohio."

"And is she like you?"

"They say she is; only she's a great deal better than I am."

"Better? If I had only had a mother, I might have been the man you will be."

"And did n't you have one?" asked James.

"No. She died when I was born. I lost my father, too, before I can remember. He left me very rich, with a large plantation, and a great many slaves. The slaves pampered and petted me; and I had all the money I could spend. No one checked or guided me; and so I grew up wayward, headstrong, and dissipated. I was expelled from college when I was twenty, and then plunged into debauchery. Before I was thirty I had squandered all I had; and then I took to gambling for a living. I won largely one night of Major Lucy; and he paid

me with that boy's mother. I meant to have sold her; but I saw the good that was in her, and kept her for myself. She was half black; but I loved her. I could n't help it, for she was all truth and goodness; and I had n't found those things in other women. She wanted me to give up gaming, and go to the Free States. I would have done it; but I did n't know how to work, and thought we should only starve; besides, I was a *gentleman*, bred up to think work degrading. We lived together ten years; and though I led a bad, reckless life, there were times when, with her, I was happy. But I got on a long debauch, the brandy maddened me, and I gambled her away. You know the rest,—the boy has told you. It has made me what I am,—a ruined, lost man."

Neither spoke for a time. At last the boy said: "I don't think you were so much to blame. A Southerner once came to our place and did some very bad things. Mother told me about it; and she said she pitied more than she blamed him. She said he had been brought up where they call bad things good, and that had warped his nature; so he could n't be expected to do as well as we. She thought that we, perhaps, are no better, for the light we have, than your folks are."

"And did your mother say—that?" asked the trooper; "do you think she would say that of me?"

"I know she would,—I know she would pity you more than I do; for she's a great deal better than I am."

A long silence again followed. It was broken by the trooper. "If I should go North with you, do you think your mother would let me, once in a while, see you and her?"

"O yes! I'm sure she would."

"And could I get work there?"

"O yes! You could tend in a store,—I have done it,—or you could do writing. There's plenty to do, so many have gone to the war."

"I would do anything,—cut wood, haul a hand-cart,—anything to be near some one who would help me—help me to be a better man than I am."

"I know mother would do it. Everybody says they're better for knowing her," answered the boy, earnestly.

"I can believe it, if she is like you. It was the goodness I saw in you that made me want to have you with me. I thought I could make you love me; and you would keep the fiends away; and so I might become a better, happier man than I am."

The boy's eyes filled as he answered: "You seem

very wretched, but you don't believe that fiends are about you !”

“Believe it boy? I know it!” exclaimed the Captain, the strange look that James had noticed at the spring coming again on his face. “I have *seen* them. I see them every night. Every night they come about me, and — *she* is among them, beckoning me to go with her. Once, I thought, she yelled in my ear, ‘I am come — come to take you down — down to the fire you built for me.’ And then I thought she seized me and dragged me down, — down through hot clouds and blazing fires, — millions of miles below. I struggled to get away, but could not ; and then, for the first time in thirty years, I prayed ; and a great hand reached down out of the clouds and tore her away, and so for the time saved me.”

“It was the hand of God !” exclaimed the boy.

“No, boy ; it was the hand of a fiend. It only kept me for greater torment. Every night she came and dragged me farther and farther down, and every night the same hand reached out and saved me ; but every night it let me go lower and lower. People said it was a dream, and I was crazy. But it was not a dream, I was not crazy. It was real, — real as hell. It *was* hell ! Some people say that God pun-

ishes us before our time by lifting the veil between this life and that. It is true. He has done it to me!" and he paused, his lip quivering, and his eye fixed on the vacant air before him. The boy's blood ran cold, and he could not speak. After a time, in a more subdued voice, the trooper went on.

"And so I am going now, not with one great plungē, but dragged down and struggling back, and dragged down and struggling back; and at every fall going lower and lower, as I once saw a man go over a cliff on the Blue Ridge. He caught on a jutting rock, and, clutching at the cedars, drew himself up, and then fell back and drew himself up, and fell back again; and so did twenty times, till at last his hold gave way, and he went down—four hundred feet!—never to rise again!"

As the Captain said this, he drew a flask from his pocket, and took a long draught of its contents.

"Ah! now I see," cried the boy. "It is the whiskey that makes you see these things."

"No, it is not," said the trooper. "It keeps them away. When I don't drink they come about me till I'm almost mad. I should kill myself at such times, if it were n't for this."

"It is the whiskey," replied the boy, "I know. Mother has told me all about it. It disorders your

brain and nerves ; and so, in your dreams, when your reason is asleep, you fancy all kinds of horrid things. Mother says the nerves are the piano the mind plays on ; when they are out of tune, they make dreadful sounds that drive us crazy, and sometimes make us murder."

"But these things come to me when I am awake, and I have seen *her* in broad day. I saw her when that boy talked to me at the spring, as plain as I see you now."

"That only shows that your nerves are badly shattered. You have drunk so much, and so long, that it has clouded your reason. I know it's so. It is *delirium tremens* ! A young man had it in our town. Mother was with him when he died ; and he told her he was in the horrid place, with the fiends all about him ; but they were n't about him, for mother was there, and nothing bad ever came where she was."

"It may be so, — it may be so," said the Captain. "I wish I could believe it, then there might be some hope for me."

"There *is* hope for you," answered the boy. "There is hope for every one, even for the worst. Mother says God loves the worst the best of all, if they only try to turn round. Did n't he leave the

good son at home, and go out to meet the prodigal, when he was yet a great way off; and did n't he fall on his neck and kiss him, and put on him the best robe, and kill for him the fatted calf? So he'll do for you, if you only turn round."

The boy's clear eye was swimming with tears as he said this. I have seen such natures — natures like open cisterns — catching all the rain that falls from the heavens, and holding it in their souls for whoever is aweary, whoever is athirst.

After a long silence, the Captain said: "I will go home with you, and get away from this wretched life I am living; but I must first go back to Mosby. He has trusted me with work he has his heart on, and he has always stood by *me*. I am an officer; we can slip away in the night at any time, and be within the Union lines in a dozen hours. But see that the boy gets away at the blacksmith's. So long as he stays, his mother is always before me."

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE BLACKSMITH'S.

THE road, at first a mere bridle-path, in which two horsemen could not ride abreast, widened, when it started northward from the little cabin, into a wagon-track overgrown with grass, and overarched with the broad branches of the oaks and maples which grew along its border. In this road the troop, half an hour later, wound slowly along, on their way to the blacksmith's.

The sun was just sinking below the trees, gilding their tops with the glow it cast on the western clouds, when they ascended a little hill overlooking the smithy, and halted to take a look at the ground below them. It was a farm of about a hundred acres, hemmed in with woods, and intersected by three roads, crossing each other so as to form a triangle in the centre of the clearing. This triangle contained something less than a dozen acres, covered with huge oaks and pines, standing far apart, and overgrown with the thick, tall grass peculiar to that part of Virginia. Midway along

one of these roads, right where a dense forest lined its other side, stood the blacksmith's house, barn, and workshop. The shop, which was close upon the highway, was a dilapidated structure of logs, with a broad plank door, and a huge clay chimney, going up on the outside, in the fashion of the country; but the house, which was located farther back from the road, was a substantial framed dwelling, covered with clapboards, and surrounded with a broad, open piazza. It evidently was the home of a man tolerably well-to-do in the world, but not of sufficient social importance to be dignified with the name of "planter."

As the troop drew up on the brow of the hill, the Captain turned his horse, and, his face wearing no trace of the strong emotion which had so recently clouded it, he said to the guide, —

"This, then, is the blacksmith's? I have seen the place before, — this same month, fifteen years ago."

"It 'r' been yere twice that long, Cap'n; and the shop longer; and old Miles hes been in 'em," answered the guide, scanning the house intently, as if he would penetrate the blank walls, and fathom the hidden life within.

"I remember him, — a worthy man. He gave me

a night's shelter when — once when I came to see the Major?"

"He *ar'* a worthy man, Cap'n!" said the guide, warmly; "just as decent a 'un as the Lord ever put breath inter."

"And yet he is a traitor. What made him that? Does n't he own slaves?"

"He done it; two or three, 'fore our folks stole 'em; but he 's allers hed the notion that the kentry ar' uverythin', and old Virginny nothin'. Thet 's all thar is agin him; for he 'm the honestest, biggest-hearted old man ye uver know'd on. Thar hain't ten men in ten miles o' this, as would n't risk thar lives ter save old Miles from a halter, traitor or no traitor."

"And he 's been giving information to the enemy, the Colonel says."

"Yas," answered the guide; "so they says. Spy-in' fur the Yanks; and it 'r' sartin he jined 'em, and fit agin us in the Wilderness."

"And how does he happen to be at home; why did n't he stay with the Yankees?"

"Wall, ye sees the old man he hed three boys. Two on 'em jined the Unions ter the beginning o' the war, and got killed. Thet wellnigh done him up, for he allers sot a heap on his boys; but he

hed one left, a little chunk uv a feller, only fifteen. Him he sot more on nur he did on all the rest, 'case he wur a sort o' chile o' his old age. Wall, ye knows the Cunnel smoked his doin's, and tried ter tuck him 'fore Grant come down this way, and did n't; fur, ye sees, some o' the neighbors got warnin' ter the old man, and he laid out in the woods. He could n't live long in that way, bein' 's uvery 'un know'd him, and mought peach on him ony time; so, when Grant came down yere, he jined the Yanks right open. Wall, Freddy had toted his feed ter him in the woods; and when his father went off, the boy follored, unbeknown ter him or his mother. He kept on his track, and come up on him ter the army; and in the battle he, too, war killed. Thet took all that old Miles hed, and, the whole turgether, made him sort o' crazy. He put the boy over his shoulder, and brung him home ter his mother. It come hard on her; but it did n't bend her loike it done him, 'case she hes the kind o' eyes thet look clar through the clouds, and see the sun allers a shinin' on tother side o' Jordan. They buried him, right thar, whar ye see the roses a-growin'"; and, dashing away a tear, the guide pointed to a little plat of flowers just at the right of the doorway.

After a time he continued, "He war a oncommon boy, — more loike a gal nur a boy, — and he loved the old man beyont tellin'; that made him go arter him." And he brushed away another tear. "It makes me a gal ter talk on it; fur, I toted him 'fore he could go, larned him ter walk, and used allers to sleep with him arter he was a-weaned from his mother."

A slight choking was in the Captain's voice, as he said, "Then you lived a long time with the blacksmith?"

"Long!" echoed the guide. "He tuck me a mere chunk uv a boy, brung me up, and was a father to me!"

The Captain's face grew suddenly red, and, turning on the guide, he said, in a voice that might have been heard a mile away, "A father to you! and you are betraying him! Get out of my sight; go away, or my pistol will go off of itself."

Without a word, the guide rode off among the trees. As he did so, a woman's face suddenly appeared in the door-way of the blacksmith's house, and, as suddenly disappeared. A moment later, a white cloth was seen flying from one of the upper windows.

"Der ye see, Cap'n?" said the Sergeant, who

trafficked in corn, and kept the run of the negro market, "they doan't see us fur the leaves; but they's yerred yer shoutin', and is guvin' some one warnin'."

"I see," answered the Captain; "that proves the blacksmith is outside. I'm not very sorry; for since I've learned who he is, I have n't much stomach for catching him."

"Hain't it more loikely that he's friends lyin' out, as he is axin' ter help him?" asked the Sergeant.

"Well, it may be; and we'd better reconnoitre the roads, and beat the bushes opposite the house. A half dozen men in that underbrush could give us a good deal of trouble."

"While we is doin' thet, moughtent the old fox, ef he's in the house, slip through our fingers?" asked the subaltern.

"Yes, he might."

"Thar, see!" now shouted the Sergeant, "they's wavin' the rag from the scuttle. Thar's men outside, as sartin as preachin'. We mought as well look for a needle in a hayrick, as for them fellers 'mong the bushes; so s'pose we post oursel's round the house, on all the roads, so as ter hem 'em in ter the openin' (the timbered triangle about the house), and not close down till it'r right dark? Thar'll be no

moon till on ter midnight, and the clouds 'll hinder the starlight ; so the fellers can't git no sight on ter us with thar shootin'-irons."

"Your advice is good, Sergeant," answered the Captain ; and concealment being longer useless, the troop emerged from the cover of the trees, and galloped openly down the hill. Turning off about five hundred yards to the north of the house, they rode rapidly round the triangle, and dropping men at short distances, soon had a cordon of troopers completely encircling the dwelling of the blacksmith. Against the wood opposite the house no one was stationed, for at that point was the apprehended danger ; but escape from the building was impossible, as every one of the four sides was within range of half a score of carbines.

So the troop remained for a full hour, while the twilight deepened into night, and the thick shadows gathered round the lonely dwelling. Gradually they closed down upon it, each one keeping in view the dim outline of his nearest comrade, and drawing nearer to it, and to the house, as both grew faint and fainter in the darkness. At last, they had advanced to within two hundred yards of the dwelling, and word was given to "close in." This done, the Captain approached the doorway.

A single candle was burning in the sitting-room, and by its light he saw a solitary woman sitting beside a small table. An open book was before her; but her eyes were off the page, and a look of harrowing suspense was on her features. She started, when she heard his demand for admission; but answered the summons promptly. She was neatly clad in homespun, had a thin, pale face, and, though not above forty-five, hair that was as white as the fields in mid-winter.

"We want your husband, Madam," said the Captain, as the woman made her appearance at the doorway.

"He is not here, sir," she answered, calmly.

"When did he go away?"

"Not far from noon to-day. I do not look for his returning."

"You don't mean that he has forsaken you?"

"O no, sir! We both intend to go where we can end our days in peace, — away from this land of crime and bloodshed. You have taken all our children, you are welcome to our property; we only ask leave to go."

"You ought to have it," answered the Captain. "If I could have my way, you should; but I have orders to arrest your husband, and I am a soldier, Madam, I must obey."

"I don't blame you, sir, but you'll not find him here."

"I believe what you say," said the Captain, "but I ought to search the house. Do you object to it?"

"Not in the least," answered the woman, "search all the buildings. He is gone, as I tell you."

"Two of you, here," said the Captain, turning to his men, "go through the house, two others to the barn and the smithy, and mind, on your lives, touch nothing."

While the men went about executing this order, the Sergeant said, in the hearing of the woman, "Yer remember the Cunnel's orders, Cap'n, — ter burn the housen if we did n't kotch the old traitor?"

"Yes," answered the trooper, "but I won't burn a house over a woman's head, when nothing is to be gained by it. If the Colonel wants it done, let him send some one else."

"Foller orders, Cap'n," cried two or three of the men, whose faces were hid by the darkness. "The Cunnel will raise —— with all on us, ef ye doan't."

"Well, let him, I won't do it," said the Captain, firmly.

"I thank you, sir," said the woman, "but don't let pity for me get you into trouble. It is only a few days that I shall stay here; and I would as soon

the house were burned. The sight of it is painful to me ; out of it all my children have gone to be—murdered.”

The Captain answered kindly : “ I shall not do it, Madam. I would like to help you to get away ; but I can’t. Do not remain longer in the damp air.”

The woman thanked him, and went within ; and a moment afterwards the two troopers came out, reporting that no one was secreted on the premises.

“ As I expected,” said the Captain, walking towards the outbuildings, near which the two boys were stationed under guard of a cavalryman. James was standing near the man, and Robert was mounted on a horse which the soldier held by the bridle.

“ Are they through the search ? ” asked the Captain.

“ Not yet, Cap’n,” answered the man ; “ I reckon they won’t wake up nuthin’ more ’n rats.”

“ Perhaps not ; but you go in and hurry them up, — I ’ll stay by the horses.”

The man dismounted, and handing the bridles to the Captain, hurried away. As soon as he was gone the latter said, in a low tone, to James, “ Now is your time, get him away ” ; and dropping the reins he followed the soldier towards the barn. James turned towards the slave boy ; but the latter needed no

prompting. The soldier had no sooner gone away than, seizing a pistol from the holster, he slid to the ground; and now, as James turned to where he was hidden behind the outside horse, he said in a loud whisper, "Come, we can get away, follow me."

The white boy instinctively let fall the reins, and followed, as the other bounded away in the darkness. Freedom, to a prisoner the dearest of all earthly things, was right before him. It gave wings to his feet, but, suddenly, as he ran, something seemed to say to him, "The Captain trusts you. Should you leave him now?" As he thought of this his pace slackened; then he paused, and then turned about and ran rapidly back to the horses. The faithful animals, more faithful than he, stood where he had left them. He had scarcely again taken the reins when the Captain strode rapidly towards him.

"Is he gone?" he said, in a quick, eager way. "Ah! I see! Thank God. *He* is off my conscience!"

Soon the men emerged from the barn; and as the last one turned to close the door, he cried out, "See, Cap'n! the house! it's afire!"

Where James and the Captain stood the view of the house was shut off by the intervening barn; but as the man spoke, they rushed to the corner

of the building, and looked towards the dwelling. Its whole after-part was ablaze! Bursting from the windows of the second story, the flames were mounting the walls, creeping up the roof, and fast tingeing the dark night with the deep glow of sunrise. The woman, her face wearing a tranquil look, stood near the doorway; and as the Captain was entering the house, she said to him, "Don't go in, sir! It's already beyond saving; let it burn."

"We can save some of the furniture," he answered. "Here, men, dismount! Four of you stay by the horses, the rest—into the house. Get out all you can!"

Carpets and feather-beds soon came on tiptoe out of the doorways, and picture-frames, looking-glasses, and crockery-ware tumbled pell-mell out of the windows; and in fifteen minutes, the larger portion of the blacksmith's household goods were scattered in disordered heaps about the court-yard. The fire had then gained such headway, that the dwelling was one mass of flame. Dancing along the eaves, leaping above the roof, and tossing its arms up to the black sky, it let down a shower of red rain, and then, gathering in a crimson cloud, floated off far away over the forest. Soon the roof

and rafters tumbled in, and then a blazing skeleton was all that was left of the blacksmith's dwelling.

"You are without shelter," said the Captain to the woman: "mount my horse, and we'll take you wherever you like."

"No, no: the nearest house is a mile away," she answered, "I will walk."

"I insist on taking you," replied the Captain; and then, turning to the rest, he added, "Mount, men, now we'll be off."

The troop had mounted, and the Captain, standing between his horse and the burning building, was helping the woman upon the pommel of his own saddle, when from the wood opposite the road came the dull report of a shot-gun, followed by the sharper crack of a rifle. Two of the troopers rolled upon the ground, wounded; and, quick as thought, the Captain bounded into his saddle, crying out, "Back, men, to the opening behind the barn. Every one of you to a tree, and give them what they send."

As they wheeled their horses, the woman said in a low tone, "It's Miles! Cling close to me, Captain, and he won't hit you."

Ping! ping! came the rifle-shots, — five times in rapid firing, and five horses or men rolled to the

ground, wounded or dying. Among them, was the poor fellow behind whom James was riding, and, grasping the reins, the boy pressed on with the rest into the timbered opening. "There's only two,"—shouted the Captain, "a shot-gun and a Spencer rifle! Quick, men! dismount, and we'll have them."

Even as the Captain spoke, a bright flash and a sharp crack came from the shadow of the smithy, not forty feet away. His horse made a mad leap into the air, then a step or two forward it staggered, and then fell heavily to the ground. The woman was thrown at the first bound, but the Captain, wounded and unable to disengage his limbs, went down with the maddened animal. A dozen men sprang to the ground, and by main force pulled away the dying horse; and then the boy lifted the head of the fallen man, saying, "Are you much hurt?"

"O yes!" he gasped; "to death! But run, boy, run!"

"I can't leave you now," said James.

"You can't do me—any good,—run!" The trooper's words came short and faint; his hand closed on the boy's tightly; his eyes grew fixed and glassy; and then his head dropped heavily to the ground.

"He is dead!" shrieked the woman, kneeling down and parting the long, gray hair from his forehead.

"Dead!" cried the Sergeant; and "Dead!" echoed the men, gathering round in the dim light of the burning house, and standing there, living targets for the death-dealing rifles in the opposite wood.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SLAVE BOY'S STORY.

“**D**EAD!” The word broke like a wail from the men, as they stood there, unmindful of their wounded comrades, and of the rifles even then levelled at their own lives! Why was this? What was there in that man, so stained with crime, so steeped in debauchery, that made them hang over his body as if they had lost their only friend? Nothing but a soul—incrusted all over with the wrongdoing of forty years, but yet—a soul.

James lingered until they lifted the Captain from the ground, and bore him to the barn as tenderly as they would have borne a child; and then, while they laid him gently on a little heap of straw, he walked slowly away.

He paused on the hill where the troop had halted a few hours before, and looked back at the burning building. Lights were moving to and fro about the grounds, and the frame of the blacksmith's house still lifted its red arms to the midnight sky; but all was still and silent around,—silent as the grave

which, even then, the troopers might be scooping for the body of their friend. But, where had gone the man's soul? The boy thought of this; and as he thought, he gave way to a feeling of bitter grief. If in his little heart there was pity for that wretched man, what, think you, there was in the Infinite bosom, whose boundless compassion to our feeble pity is as the great ocean to the smallest drop ever wept by the clouds?

After a time the boy walked forward. Uncertain which way to go, he paused a moment, and again looked back at the burning house. The lights, which had been scattered about the grounds, were now collected in the barn, and the troopers were attending on their wounded comrades, stretched there upon the floor. The larger number were grouped around the little bed of straw, on which he had seen them lay the Captain. Kneeling beside him, they seemed to be chafing his limbs, bathing his forehead, and moistening his lips with something one held in his hand. Could it be that he was still living? O no! He was dead; for soon they brought in a wide board, and lifted his head, as if to lay him upon it. They had only been arranging his limbs, and now were about to bear him out to bury him.

The boy could look no more; and, turning away,

he again walked forward. He had gone but a few paces, when a shadow glided from the opposite wood, and came towards him. "Is he dead?" it asked in a voice eager and trembling.

"Yes, — dead!" answered James.

"Thank God!" exclaimed the other, half speaking, half grating the words through his closed teeth.

"What do you mean?" cried James, stepping back and trying to scan the slave boy's features in the darkness.

"What I say, I hated that man. I am glad he is dead!" and he laughed a bitter, hollow laugh, the echo of the dark passion which, more than any other, allies men to fiends.

"You should not hate him; bad as he is, God loves him."

"Not hate the man who killed my mother with a slow death! Would you not do it?"

The white boy hesitated before he answered: "No, I think not. I should try to forgive him, — try to leave him to God. The Bible says, vengeance belongs to Him."

"So it does; but it says, too, that He makes his ministers a flame of fire!"

"Yes; the fire, the storm, and the lightning are all His ministers, but we should let Him direct them."

"I suppose He does ; but the lightning does n't always strike in the right place."

"It may not seem to : but it does, — *always in the right place*. He has suffered more than a thousand deaths."

"Do you know that? Are you sure of it?" cried the slave boy, quickly, eagerly.

"Yes. He told me so. He has thought he was in hell, with the fiends about him ; and all because he drank, and — did wrong by your mother."

"Thank God ! thank God ! O my mother, my mother ! you are avenged !" and even in the dark night, the white boy thought he saw his form dilate, and his arms stretch out wildly to the black sky. A cold horror ran over him, — the same which at the spring had chilled his blood, and made his heart almost stop beating. For a while both stood in the road silent ; then the white boy said : "Why should you hate *him* so much? He did no greater wrong than your own father."

"He did. I will tell you. But, come ; let us go on" ; — and he clutched the other's arm with the grip of an iron vice. "As soon as *he* is buried they will follow us, — not you, but me, — for, ha ! ha ! my blood and bones are better than yours, — they will *sell* for something ! If he were living, there would

be no danger, for he wanted to be rid of me. Even my shadow, as it kept abreast of him on the grass, was a torture to him. I saw it. It haunted him as we went along the road, as if it had been the ghost of my mother!"

Again for a while they said nothing, but walked slowly on in the darkness. The clouds were breaking away, and here and there a star was shining; and the wind came through the trees, not noisily, but in broken, stifled sobs, as if it were the angels weeping over the human sorrow which the night hid from the eyes of men.

At last the slave boy broke the silence. "You remember," he said, "the children's quarter at the plantation,—the long, low building, with the great chimney at the end?"

"Yes, I was in it. Your grandmother told me you lived there until your mistress took you to the mansion."

"I did. After my mother was gambled off, I was kept there,—huddled half naked on its dirty floor with about twenty other children, whose mothers were either dead or sold away. I remember one night,—a bleak winter night, when the wind shook the old cabin, and the snow blew in great drifts through the logs,—that, all but frozen with the in-

tense cold, I tried to get at the fire. The older children had crowded round it, and were keeping the younger ones away ; and after bearing the cold as long as I could, I asked a larger boy to let me sit on the hearth before him a few minutes, — only a few minutes. He refused ; and when I urged him, struck me. I was only six, and he was eleven ; but the blow maddened me. I grappled with him, threw him to the floor, and then stamped upon him, and beat him about the head and face until his best friends would n't have known him. The other children, and the old woman who had charge of us all, stood by powerless with fear ; but the yells of the boy brought the negroes from the other cabins just in time to save me from doing a murder.

“One of them went for my master, — I did n't then know he was my father, — and he came, and, while I crouched down by the fire, listened to the story of the old woman. She told it worse than it was, and painted me as a young devil ; but he only said I was ‘a chip of the old block,’ took me up in his arms, and carried me off to the mansion. I expected a beating, but he ordered me a warm supper, and put me to bed in a room with my grandmother. In the morning he gave me a suit of warmer clothes, and said, ‘Go back to the cabin, Robby, and if a smaller

boy ever strikes you, don't strike him back, only laugh at him ; but if a larger one does it, pitch into him, and if you can't whip him, let me know and I'll have it done.'

"I told him I would, and was going away, when the mistress came in and proposed I should stay at the mansion. Grandmother was cook at the great house, and she had persuaded her to do this. My master gave his wife a queer look, and said he had wanted to take me ever since Hannah, my mother, had gone away, but had not dared to propose it.

"After that, during the day, I did little chores about the house for the mistress, and at night slept in a room with my grandmother. The mistress was a weak, silly woman, fond of show and dress ; but she always treated me kindly, and so did my father when she was not by ; then, he never seemed to know I was in the room.

- "So things went on for a year, when one night my grandmother woke me out of a sound sleep, crying and taking on 'as if some great thing had happened. I said nothing, only listened. She was on her knees asking God to bless master, because he had promised never to sell me, never to part us, and to let her teach me to read, so I might learn all about God and heaven. She went to bed, and I went to sleep while she was praying and singing.

"I learned fast, and very soon could read in any part of the Bible. Then, one day I went into the library, where my father was alone, and he asked me if I knew my letters. I told him I did, and read to him a whole chapter. He gave me another book; and making me sit down close by him, said very kindly, 'Now, Robby, read from this, and don't be discouraged if it comes harder than the Bible.' It was a volume of Shakespeare, and, right off, I read nearly the whole of Othello. Then he took me on his knee, and said it was a pity I was n't all white; but I must come to the library whenever the mistress could spare me, and read whatever I liked. I did,—passed whole days there, devouring the great books, and living in a new world; and no matter how busy master was, he never found me in the way, and always had a kind word for me.

"About a year after this—I was nearly nine—he sold away his body-servant, and the mistress let him take me in his place. Then I was with him all the while, and he set me regular lessons out of the other children's books; and soon, though they had a governess, I was ahead of them. Then he took me again on his knee, and said again, and a great tear was in his eye as he said it, 'Robby, it's a pity you're not all white.'

"I went with him everywhere,—to Richmond, Washington, everywhere ; and though he was a passionate man, he never once struck me, or spoke to me unkindly. He seemed to love me ; my grandmother doted on me, and every one was kind to me : but I was not happy, for within me was a ceaseless yearning for something, — for the love of a mother. The other children in the house and at the quarters had mothers, and I longed for one too ; would gladly have exchanged places with the poorest field boy on the plantation, if, like him, I could have laid my head on a mother's lap, and wept my little griefs away. My grandmother told me to pray, and then God might soften master's heart, and make him buy my mother. I did so ; and night after night I lay awake praying until morning. But God did n't hear me. My mother did not come back. Then I took to reading the Bible,—reading it from end to end, over and over again, to find out what I must do to bring her back ; but I could find out nothing. It only told me to pray ; so I kept on praying, but my very heart was breaking.

"One day, while I was in this mood, master came into the library, and found me crying bitterly. 'Robby, what are you crying about?' he asked, very

kindly. I told him, and went down on my knees, and begged him to buy my mother. He took me up gently, and said he would if he could, but he could not. He had offered four times her value, but the man who owned her would not part with her on any terms. It was the truth, for tears were in his eyes when he said it.

“Well, three years went away. We often heard of my mother, but none of the family ever saw her. She was going about to Richmond, Vicksburg, New Orleans, everywhere, the mistress of a gambler. I was old enough to know what that meant, and the thought of it almost drove me crazy.”

“In the house was a boy and a girl older than I, and two younger boys, my half-brothers and sister. The mistress was fond of society, and often made great parties, at which we and the neighbors' children acted in dramas and tableaux. I was only a slave boy, but I always had a part, for I was the best actor among them. I was so good, that master would say that when I grew up I should be put upon the stage, just to show the hypocritical parsons that a black man is as smart as a white one. I suppose this was owing to grandmother's father having been a king. He *was* a king, ruled over thousands of men, where men are free, free as the storms

among the mountains. My grandmother said I was just like him, had his air, his ways, his very features ; and that, I suppose, accounts for my being naturally an actor, for kings are only actors.

“Well, one night when I was twelve years old, — I remember it as if it were yesterday, — we played Othello, and I was Iago. I had played the part often, knew it all by heart, but never before took in its meaning. He was a low, mean, skulking villain, but he had a great purpose, and a great passion. That passion took possession of me. It crept into my veins, looked out of my eyes, and loomed up before me at night, a gaunt, ghastly figure, with a whetted knife always in its hand. It was Revenge !

“One night I told my grandmother about it, and she said the evil spirits had got hold of me, and I must pray and read the Bible. I read the Bible, read how David and the old prophets prayed God to curse their enemies, and the spirits only took stronger hold of me. I read, too, how God was a God of vengeance, and I knew that men, and angels, and devils are only his instruments. I was a man, if not in years, then in soul, and slowly it came upon me that I was God’s instrument to avenge my mother on the gambler.

“I said so to my grandmother ; and then, for

the first time, she told me the truth, — that my master was my own father; that he had sold my mother away, and for years had used her just as she was being used by the gambler. What she meant to soothe me only roused me the more. I had read of everything, but of nothing like that! What were Zanga's or Hamlet's wrongs to mine? It was not a father murdered, — that I could have borne, — it was a mother dishonored, polluted in body and soul by my own father and a wretched gamester, who tricked his dirty bread from greedy fools, and, perhaps, bought his filthy drink with the wages of her shame! It was enough to stir the blood in a beggar's veins. It stirred mine, for it is the blood of kings, — of kings, I tell you! and then, two victims rose ghastly before me, — the gambler, and my own father!

“I whetted a knife, and one night I stole behind him in the library. The candle cast my shadow on the wall. He saw it, sprang up, and wrenched the knife from my hand. I expected he would kill me; and, opening my arms, I told him to do it; for I was mad with passion. He merely locked the door; put the knife in his pocket, and pointed me to a seat near him. Then he said, — and his voice was as kindly as if it had been the voice

of my mother, — ‘Robby, why do you try to murder me?’

“I told him all, for I scorned concealment; and he said: ‘Poor boy; you would kill your best friend. If I were dead, you might be set at work in the fields, or even sold to Georgia.’

“I told him I did not care what became of me; that if I lived I would avenge my mother.

“‘But killing me won’t do it, Robby,’ he answered. ‘I have done both her and you wrong, but I am willing to atone for it; willing to give any price for her; to set you both free, and send you both North, where you can grow up as good as any man.’

“‘And why don’t you do it?’ I yelled, storming with passion; for I did not believe he meant what he said.

“‘I have told you,’ he answered, ‘that Thompson won’t sell her; and I tell you now, that I have offered him ten thousand dollars for her. I loved your mother, love her still, for she is the best woman I ever knew. I refused to part with her, though my wife made my house almost too hot to hold me; but one night, when I was gaming, that man won her from me. I was drunk; he had drugged the liquor, for I had taken only two glasses. I had to pay the debt; or be pointed at as a man without

honor. I was weak. I had n't courage to meet the shame, and I let her go. The night she went away, I offered him twice her value, if he would let her stay ; but he refused. I have since, several times, offered ten thousand dollars for her, and — he has refused it.'

"I asked him if he would offer it again ; and sitting down at his table he wrote a letter to the gambler. He said in it that he would pay that price ; and if that was not enough he would pay more, and agree to set my mother free. When he had sealed and directed the letter, he gave it to me to put into the post-office, and then said : 'He may not accept of this, Robby ; but whether he does or not, the day you are eighteen you shall be free, and have enough to begin life in the Free States. I would let you go now, but you have hot blood in you, — you get it from me and your king of a grandfather, — and you need guiding. Here is your knife, you may take my life if you will ; perhaps I should take yours if you had wronged me as I have wronged your mother.'

"I threw the knife away, fell at his feet, clasped his knees, and begged him to forgive me. He took me up in his arms, and, for the first time in his life, kissed me. And that was my father ! As he

was, way down at the bottom of his soul, — that was my father !”

The wind sobbed low among the trees, and the new-risen moon cast a pale glow on the face of the slave boy as he said this. Such a look James had never seen on a human face. It was that of a mother bending over a dead child, — grief, tenderness, despair, were all in it.

After a while he went on.

“At the end of a fortnight a letter came from the gambler. He refused to sell my mother ; said there was not money enough in Virginia to buy her ; and that she did not want to be free ! He said that, and within three years sold her, — sold her for a paltry sum, and — to be a slave-trader’s mistress !

“Well, the war broke out. I was seventeen, and mother was two years dead, — dead, but living in my dreams ; for every night she came to me, sat by my bed, and with her cold, pale, sweet face, smiled blessings on me ! I do not know how it was, but the air she brought stilled the tempest in my veins, and blunted the purpose of my life, — revenge.

“But the war broke out. A great gale came down from the North and woke my slumbering passions. The blood of my kingly fathers throbbed again to

the music of battle, and roused me to the wrongs of my race. But that was not all. He—the gambler—was among them; and I could meet him in fair fight, and strike, at one blow, for my mother and my people!

“My father was a leading Rebel; but one night I went to him, and said, ‘Be one year better than your word,—let me go!’ ‘Where would you go?’ he asked. I told him; and he flew into a storm of passion; poured upon me a torrent of abuse; called me traitor, renegade, miscreant, ingrate, coward, and ordered me from his sight. Without a word I went,—for he was my father. My grandmother blessed me, and bade me go, for she thought I was going—to be a man. I *was* going to be a man; but not the man she meant,—the docile drudge of some white-livered wretch, who ate his humble pie, and chinked his greasy gold at home, while traitors were tearing out the very vitals of his country. Not such a man!

“Well, I went, and the Yankee general locked me up, and sent me back to my father. Why? My arms are as strong, my body as straight, my features as good, my skin almost as white as yours! Why? Because the hot sun had tanned my grandfather’s face, and at the distance of a hundred years cast a shadow upon mine!

“My father’s passion was over; and he said to me, as coolly as I say it to you: ‘Robby, I have done for you what I have done for no other of my children,—educated you myself; and I have loved you better than them all. In return, you have betrayed me, and your country. You wanted to be a slave, one of the meanest kind,—a Yankee slave. You *shall* be a slave, where the thing is as bad as the name.”

“He kept his word. He sold me to Georgia. I did not blame him; for had I been he, I should have done as he did. After the good mistress in Georgia had taken me to the mansion, and the crisis of my fever was over, one night—whether I was waking or sleeping I do not know—I was aroused by some one entering my room. The moonlight came dimly through the open window, but it cast no shadow. I looked up,—the air was heavy with human breath; yet I could see nothing; but I felt—as you have felt when some one has come unseen and noiselessly upon you—a human presence filling all the room. Soon, as I looked, a shadow came out of the opposite wall,—dim, wavy, jagged,—the mere outline of a form like nothing mortal. Slowly it rounded out, slowly as if being created, and grew into a moving figure, with gaunt, bony hands, long,

withered arms, and red, blazing eyes that glared on me with the look of a demon. A cold horror crept over me, and I covered my face with the bedclothes. When I looked again, a long knife was in its hand, whetted and glittering. And then I saw its features. They were those I had seen thousands of times in my glass; and yet, they were not mine, nor my mother's, nor my kingly ancestor's; but something made up of them all. Grandmother says they are all alike, but they are not. His are the midnight storm, hers the evening breeze, mine — what you see them. The thin, skinny hand pointed to the North; and then reached out, and offered me the knife-hilt. I clutched it, and it turned into a pistol, — a large navy repeater. Then the figure faded, and in its place came a man on horseback. It was he, the gambler! I knew him by that likeness before my grandmother spoke his name in the library! I raised the pistol, fired, and horse and rider went to the ground, quivering. A dozen men sprang forward, and pulled the horse away; but *he* had gone down — down to hell, where I sent him."

The slave boy paused, and drew the large navy pistol he had taken from the holster of the trooper. Holding it up a moment in the moonlight, he cried: "That was months ago; but here is the repeater, and yonder is the man, — all that is left of him."

"And *you* killed him!" gasped the white boy, starting back, the cold horror again running along his veins.

"I did!" cried the other in a ringing tone, his dark eye glittering like burnished steel; "if he had had a thousand lives, I would have taken them all."

CHAPTER VIII.

A MIDNIGHT ENCOUNTER.

IT was a terrible deed, and a terrible spirit that prompted it, — the very spirit which drove the bad angels to the dark abodes where is only weeping and wailing forever. But, while we shudder at the crime, may we not pity the criminal? May we not remember his misguided life, his misdirected passions, his cruel wrongs, which, rankling long in his soul, had at last driven him to the very verge of madness?

It was of this that the white boy thought, as he turned away, and bent down his head in silence. As he thought, he prayed, — the very prayer which, eighteen hundred years ago went up from the lips of the FATHER'S best-beloved SON, — "Forgive him; for he knows not what he does!"

The slave boy stood for a while watching his companion, and saying nothing; but at last he made a sudden movement. Bending his ear low to the ground, he clutched the other by the arm, and, in a hurried voice, said, "Come. We must go. I hear the tread of horses. They are following us!"

The white boy turned, and, shaking off his hold, said in a startled way: "Go! quick! Do not let them take you! Run! run for your life!"

"We must both run, — we'd better take to the woods. We can fast for a day or two, — by that time they'll have left the mansion," answered Robert, not heeding the altered manner of James.

"No, Robert," replied James, "I cannot go with you. Until you see the great crime you have done, we cannot be friends."

"Crime!" echoed the slave lad, in a tone of strong passion; but in a moment, half choking back his words, he added, with more of his usual manner: "So be it! I don't blame you. You don't know me, — you *can't* know me. Your blood is stagnant mud, — mine is blazing fire! If I believed in your God, I might be the tame slave that you are."

Not heeding the taunt, the white boy said: "You *will* believe in Him, if not here, then hereafter. I shall pray that you may, and that He may forgive you."

"Forgive me!" cried the other, the fierce look again on his face; "ask pardon for your own sins; don't waste your prayers on mine!"

"You need pardon more than you know. The time will come when you will think so. But go, the Rebels are upon us. Go!"

The slave boy darted into the woods, and James slunk back among the underbrush which lined the road, at the very moment that the horsemen ascended the little knoll on which they were standing. There were but four of them, — three men and a woman; and as they came slowly forward into the moonlight, the white boy saw they were not Rebels. The woman's face was hidden by a deep hood; but beneath the slouched hat of the man riding beside her, James detected the long gray hair, and strong, furrowed features of the soldier whom he had seen with the dead boy on the battle-ground. It flashed upon him. He was the blacksmith! Leaving his concealment, the boy stepped out into the roadway.

"Halt!" cried the man. "Who goes there?"

"A friend," answered James, moving toward him.

"Halt, I say!" again cried the man. "Not another step. Who are you?"

"He 'm all right, Boss," said one of the others, riding closely to the boy. "He 'm the little feller as the Cap'n tuck ter Major Lucy's. We 're right glad you 're got away, but what is ye a-doin' yere?"

"I started to go back to the mansion," answered James, recognizing the guide; "but have altered my mind. I want to get to the Union lines."

"Ye 's forty miles frum them, and thar 's a right

smart chance ye 'll be took ; 'sides, I 'll bet high on it, ye don't know a rod o' the way," said the man in a kindly tone.

"I don't, but perhaps you 'll tell me?" answered James.

"Thar hain't no safe route, but the one the birds travel—over the tree-tops. On any other road thar hain't ten men, or wimmin uther, as would n't hunt ye down loike a dog, ef they seed the color o' yer clo'es. I don't tuck ter 'em myself; but I reckon yer a loikely lad. What der ye say, Boss? wont ye tuck him along? ♣Ye mought put it to my 'count."

The blacksmith had been scanning the face of the boy during this conversation, and now asked, "Where have I seen you, my lad?"

"On the battle-ground, near to Major Lucy's," answered James.

The man started as if some unseen hand had struck him, and then, without a word, rode rapidly away, the woman following.

"Ye made him think uy Freddy. He ar' sore on thet, drefful sore," said the guide. "But git ye up yere, I 'll manage the Boss."

As James mounted behind the guide, he said to him, "Is not that the lady I saw at the burning house?"

"Yas. She's staid a-nussin' the Cap'n, and thet's made us late; we must hurry up, or he'll git ter Mosby afore I does."

"What! Is the Captain not dead!" exclaimed James, in a loud, eager tone.

"Dead! Why no, only wounded. The hoss fallin' on him, knocked out his senses, that war all. He'll be well in a week."

"Thank God! thank God!" cried James.

This joyful exclamation was mingled with a smothered curse from the thick bushes by the roadside. The guide heard it, and levelling his carbine quick as thought, he cried out, "Come out o' thet, or I'll fire."

The bushes swayed slightly, but gave no answer, and the man was about to fire, when the white boy grasped his hand, exclaiming: "Don't shoot! He is my friend!"

"Let him come out then. I'm at ticklish wuck. I can't hev no skulkers round."

As the guide spoke, Robert stepped into the road, and, looking him coolly in the face, said, "What do you want with me?"

"I wants to know what ye's a doin' yere, — that's all, fur I doan't loike uther yer color or yer looks. Tell me thet, or I'll put a bullet through ye," responded the guide.

The other horseman had ridden forward after the blacksmith, and the trooper and Robby were not unequally matched. Drawing the large navy repeater, the latter took a step or two towards the guide, and said, coolly: "Two can play at that game. But I 'll answer your questions if you 'll answer mine."

"Ye knows a'ready all I keers ter keep ter myself," said the trooper, with a merry laugh, dropping the muzzle of his carbine.

"And I know, too, it would cost your life, if I should whisper it to Mosby," said the slave lad as coolly as before.

"I reckon!" answered the other, "but ye carn't skeer me with no sich talk. I 'se counted the cost; and I reckon a man's life hain't wuth much if he carn't look hisself in the face."

"You're a true man; I 'll not betray you," said the slave boy, putting up his pistol. "Has the troop started for the mountains?"

"I reckon not. They hain't loikely ter go afore daylight; they 'll hev ter borry a waggin ter tote the Cap'n."

"And they 'll not get through to-morrow?"

"No. They 'll be loikely ter camp out over night. The Cap'n carn't travil fast ef he 's hurted nigh so bad as the ma'am say."

"Which road will they take?"

"The stretest, I reckon; but why on yerth does ye want ter know?"

"No matter. Who is in command now?"

"The Sargint, in course; the feller as sots so high on niggers," answered the trooper, with a smothered laugh.

"Then you'll be followed before morning!"

"Follered!" echoed the guide, "why, bless yer soul! he reckons I'm ter camp afore now. I tuck a stret line fur it, and thet's how I come onter ole Miles."

"That may be; but he knows that only two fired on them, — Bursley and the blacksmith; and he's sense enough to guess they would make at once for Bursley's cabin. Lend me your horse, and I'll stand guard till you are safely away."

"Lend ye my hoss!" echoed the guide; "I'd as soon think o' lettin' ye kiss my sweetheart, — 'sides, I must put out ter onst fur the camp. But, ye's a sensible feller, ef ye does sell by the pound. S'pose ye come on ter the shanty, and tuck John's nag. It b'longs ter one o' our men; and 't won't do fur John ter hev it round, but 't won't make no odds ter ye; — ye's stolen property yerself."

The slave boy assented, and a brisk half-hour's walk took the party to the little log-house in the clearing.

CHAPTER IX.

RECAPTURED.

A BRIGHT light was shining through the logs of the old cabin, and, rapping at its door, James and the guide were soon admitted. A dense smoke filled the apartment ; but through the thick cloud the boy saw the indistinct outlines of half-a-dozen people. None of them spoke until the new-comers stood in the full blaze of the fire ; then a joyful cry broke from a huge bundle of clothes in the corner, and James felt his arms pinioned in the warm embrace of old Katy.

“Am it you, honey? am it you?” she cried, wedding in the words between the caresses.

“Yes, Aunty,” said the boy ; “but I did n’t expect to find you here !”

“I ’se sot out arter Robby,” she answered. “Whar am de chile? De ma’am say he ’m got shut ob de goorillas.”

“He has. He is now down the road keeping watch until we are safely away.”

“Bress de Lord ! bress de Lord fur dat,” exclaimed

the old woman, crossing her hands on her breast, and lifting her eyes upward. "It am de Lord's doin's. I know'd he'd neber leab me nur forsake me."

She knew this, but she also knew that the Lord works always by means; and, doubting the Captain's ability to effect the release of her grandson, she had set out, a few hours after his departnre, to walk all the way to the camp of the guerillas. Mosby, she had heard, was a cruel, hard-hearted man; but she felt sure he could not resist the pleading of such love as hers for Robby. Where the camp was she did not know; but she remembered that Bursley had been in the Rebel army, and, coming to his house to learn the route, had been told by his wife to await his return in the morning. So it was that, so late at night, she was found with the party of fugitives at the old log cabin in the clearing.

The guide watched with a pleased look the meeting between James and old Katy, and when it was over, turned to the blacksmith, who was sitting on a rough bench at the farther end of the room, and said, "Ye'll tuck the boy along, Boss! He ar' a loikely lad."

"I will," answered the other, without lifting his eyes to the speaker.

"Wall, it 'r' loike ye ; howsomever, I thanks ye," said the guide. Then advancing a few steps, and holding out his hand, he added, "I must be goin', — good by."

"Not a-going to fight again for this cursed Rebellion!" said the blacksmith, rising suddenly to his feet. "You'll not do that, Jake!"

"Not fur the Rebellion, Boss, — fur ole Virginy. I could n't sleep o' nights ef I did n't do all I could fur the ole State."

"And what has she ever done for you, or for poor men like you?"

"Nothing," answered the guide, smiling, "but guv'n us a chance ter root or die."

"She has not. She has taken the bread from your mouths to feed the rich man. She has cursed you with a set of aristocrats who have stolen all the best land, and left you only a sorry patch, just big enough for your graves. That is all she has done for you, and yet you fight for her! You cannot succeed. A just God will not uphold wickedness forever; and He does not mean that the children shall be as the fathers, without knowledge, without morals, without religion, crushed down and trodden on by a set of men who do nothing, produce nothing, and only cumber the ground. Be a man, Jake. Turn about. Fight for your country."

"That ar' - the difference atween us, Boss," answered the guide, gravely. "Yer kentry ar' bigger'n mine, it tucks in all creation; mine ar' bounded by Ole Virginny. I hate ter be at odds wi' ye, fur I loves ye and the ma'am. I feels all ye has done fur me, and I hain't ongrateful. I would die fur ye. Ter do ye ony good, I'd hang willin' ter the nighest tree; but — good by, God bless ye."

The blacksmith grasped his hand, his wife threw her arms about his neck, and then the guide went out into the darkness.

For a while all was silence, and the cloud of smoke, blown again into the room by the opening of the door, clearing away, James looked around the apartment. It was squalid, cheerless, and comfortless in the extreme. Its floor was a few loose plank, only half covering the ground; and its furniture, a couple of tottering bedsteads, an old pine table, three or four broken chairs, and the rude bench on which the blacksmith and his wife were seated. A huge iron pot, from which a leg of ham protruded, was hanging over the fire; but the rest of the cooking utensils, which might have been packed in a soldier's knapsack, were littered about the hearthstone. Five saffron-hued children, asleep in one of the beds, and a gaunt, half-starved, dilapidated figure, somewhat.

resembling a man, sitting moodily in a corner, with the others I have mentioned, were the occupants of the apartment.

James was wondering how human beings — to say nothing of children — could exist in such a place, when his eye caught that of the blacksmith following his in its curious survey of the premises. The boy looked down; but the man said, — a singular expression, half sad, half mirthful, playing over his features, — “You don’t have such houses at the North!”

“No, sir : not such *houses*. Are there many such here?”

“Many? Thousands in this valley, and along the Blue Ridge. Scarcely any of our poor people, anywhere, have better; and even these they don’t own. They belong to the aristocrats, who give them the use of them and of ground enough to plant a few hills of corn and potatoes, on condition that they vote and fight at their bidding, — vote and fight to keep themselves and their children poor and of no account forever. That is the way the Rebel leaders brought about Secession, and filled the Southern army, — by getting the poor whites down, and holding them down, till — all but in name — they were as much slaves as the blacks. Bursley, here, is forty

years old, but he can't read or write, and, until he went into the army, was never out of this county in his life. His father, and his grandfather before him, lived on this clearing, and paid their rent by voting for old Lucy and young Lucy, — sold their birth-right for a mess of pottage, and mighty poor pottage at that. John did the same till about a year ago. He was n't to blame, for he did n't know any better; but then he remembered that he was a man, and ran away; and now they are hunting him down as they would hunt a wild beast."

As the blacksmith spoke the last words, the bowed figure in the corner rose, and, coming forward, opened a tattered garment which once had been a shirt, and showed the boy his naked breast in the fire-light. It was of a swarthy hue, and deeply ridged where the thin flesh fell away about the ribs; but over its ridges and hollows — red as fire, and large as a man's hand — was the letter D, scarred into it by a hot iron.*

* "Branding deserters," writes one who has seen the thing done at Richmond, "is a beautiful operation, and as humane as beautiful. The culprit is fastened to a large table, and a large 'D' is scarred upon his person. In other countries where this punishment is inflicted, a bar of iron with a type or letter on one end of it is used, which, being heated, is applied to the spot to be branded. But a more cruel process and instrument are employed

"This," said the man, with a grim smile, "are the what I owes 'em. For every drap o' blood they drawed yere, I'll hev a life, as sûre as thar's a God in heaven."

"It is awful," said James, turning his head away, a sickly feeling coming over him.

"Awful!" echoed the blacksmith. "Which is worse, — to torture the body, or starve the soul? These men have legislated the poor man out of all his rights, — out of schools and churches, and so kept him ignorant and degraded, made him servile and dependent, without any ambition or any aspirations for a better condition. And now they are making him fight to rivet the chains upon his own

by the chivalry. A plain bar of iron, about an inch in diameter, narrowed down a little at the point, is heated to incandescence, and used as a sign painter would use a brush in lettering, only in a very slow and bungling manner. A greasy smoke with a sickly stench arises, accompanied with crackling sounds and the groans of the victim, as the hot iron sinks deep into the flesh. On pretence of rendering the mark of disgrace plain and indelible, but in reality to torture the unfortunate culprit, the hot iron is drawn many times through the wound, making it larger and deeper, until the victim, unable to endure the excruciation longer, faints, and is carried away. The operation was always performed by Keppard, the executioner of Kellogg; probably the greatest demon in human form outside of Pluto's dominions."

limbs, and to transmit his own degradation to his remotest children."

"I never heard of this before," said James. "I think the North does n't understand that poor white people are so much oppressed at the South."

"It don't. Of course it don't. If it did, it would shed a few tears for the whites as well as for the blacks; it would take some means to get truth to these people, to free them from the control of the aristocrats, and fit them for the same freedom it is giving the negro."

"That ar' true, Boss," said the woman of the house, turning round from tending the boiling kettle. "We is wuss off nur the niggers."

"Not worse than the slaves?" exclaimed James.

"Wuss?" she answered, "*I* reckon we is! They is keered fur when they is old; and when thar wuck ar' done, it *ar'* done; but we hain't never keered fur, and our wuck hain't never done. I'se hard at it uvery night arter the nigs is gone ter roost; and thet 's the way wi' all the pore people round yere. We gits no edication, don't know nothin', and has ter wuck all our lives fur them as owns this sile. That 's it. We has chillen, and they grows up, and don't know no more, and hain't no better off nur we. I reckon we *is* a sight wuss off nur the niggers."

Both spoke earnestly; and it was plain that the trials of the blacksmith had somewhat embittered his feelings; but the boy had seen enough of Southern life to convince him that they spoke the truth. And they did speak a great truth,—one which we shall do well to heed. These poor whites must be educated and elevated; for until they are, and are emancipated from the control of the chivalry, the Union will not be secure, and our country will not be really great and free.

But, while I am saying this, the blacksmith has risen from his seat, and walked nervously up and down the room. Soon, turning to John's wife, he says, "Ruth, is n't the bacon almost boiled? We must be twenty miles away by sunrise."

The words were scarcely spoken, when the door was flung open, and Robert appeared in the doorway. "Run!" he cried, "the Rebels are on you! Run, for your lives!"

He disappeared as quickly as he came, and all in the room sprang to their feet. No trace of his recent excitement appeared on the blacksmith's face; and, as cool and collected as if going about his ordinary pursuits, he said, "Pour the kettle of water on the fire, Ruth. They mus' n't get-aim at us. John, bar the door; and you, my lad, and the women folks,

go into the loft. Don't be afraid; there is n't more than a dozen of them, and behind these logs we can keep them at bay for a twelvemonth."

"A dozen ag'in two are big odds, Boss. Ye don't mean ter stand yer ground?" said the poor white man, going towards the door.

"I do," answered the blacksmith. "I 'm too old to run any more."

"Wall, Boss, then ye kin count me out," and quickly opening the door, the "native" darted away across the clearing.

A bitter smile played on the blacksmith's face for a moment; but then, quietly barring the door, he said, as if speaking to himself: "He can't be blamed. What can be expected of blood that has been cowed down for a century."

The women had by this time gone into the attic, and James stood alone by the hearth, treading out the last embers of the fire. When this was done, he turned to the blacksmith: "I 'll be frank with you, sir," he said, "they 'll release me if they take me to Mosby; but I 'll stand by you."

"Well, you 'll be better than John. Can you fire a shot-gun?"

"I have done it."

Handing him John's weapon, the blacksmith said:

"Stand there in the chimney-corner. Keep quiet, and don't fire until I do, —then be sure of your man."

The full moon lit the clearing with a sort of dim daylight; but inside the house all now was as dark, and apparently as empty, as a beggar's pocket. For a while they waited in silence, and nothing but the deep breath of the blacksmith broke the stillness; but soon the faint tramp of horsemen sounded far down the road towards the smithy.

"They are coming, boy," he said. "Keep cool, and don't fire till you are certain of a man."

The sounds came nearer, and soon a dozen cavalry emerged from the belt of trees which skirted the clearing. A half of them turned off, as if to gain the woods in the rear, and the rest, dismounting, crept softly towards the front of the cabin. When within two hundred yards they halted, and one came nearer, walking his horse by his side, and keeping under the lee of the animal. Soon he paused and shouted, "Ho! In thar! Come out, or we'll burn the building."

No answer was returned, and he repeated the summons; but again all was silence. He had called several times, when one of the men in the rear cried out, "They hear ye, Sargint. Fire into the shanty."

Resting his musket across the back of the horse,

the Sergeant fired into the window. The shot brought a reply which no one had expected. One of the sleeping children uttered a piercing cry, and an answering yell from its mother sounded from the attic.

“My God!” exclaimed the blacksmith, dropping his rifle, and hurrying to the bedside. “I did not think of the children!”

The men outside were like-minded; for, careless who was hit, they sent another bullet crashing through the window, in the direct pathway of the first one. Lifting the screaming child tenderly in his arms, the blacksmith said, “Whar are you hurt, little one? Tell me, that’s a good child”;—but a deeper scream was the only answer.

By this time the mother was down the stairway, the other children were awake, and all were screaming in chorus.

“Go to the door, my lad. Tell them we surrender, —these children must not be murdered,” said the blacksmith, still trying to soothe the screaming little one.

James did as he was bidden, and soon half a dozen dark forms filled the doorway. “A light, — quick! This child is hurt! Some of you bring a lantern,” said the now captive blacksmith.

A lantern was not among the troopers' equipments, but one of them soon kindled a pine-knot, and brought it to the bedside. Hastily removing its scanty clothing, they examined every square inch of the child's person, and — found it as sound and as round as a silver dollar. And so it is, the cry of a child will do what the force of twelve men, armed to the teeth, cannot accomplish.

But the boy and the blacksmith were prisoners; and between those two, who, for thirty years, had lived only one life, there came a parting. I cannot describe it; for such scenes tug too hard at the heart-strings. There were no cries, no tears, but a short prayer, a long embrace, and then an agony of silence. Noiseless but deep the broad river runs, when it sinks into the dark ocean forever.

CHAPTER X.

THE CAPTAIN'S DREAM.

THE first gray of morning was streaking the east, when the troop rode up to the barn of the blacksmith. Bidding the prisoners dismount, the Sergeant led the way into the building. On a pile of straw in a corner the Captain lay sleeping, his face upturned in the early light, and over it a smile playing, like that of a child when dreaming. Touching him gently on the shoulder, the Sergeant said, "Cap'n, we has got the blacksmith."

He opened his eyes, raised himself on his elbow, and in a half dreamy way, answered, "All right, all right, I am ready." Then looking round, he caught sight of James, and, holding out both his hands, said, fully aroused, "What! are you here, my boy? Come to me."

James went to him, took his hands, and sat down by his side. "Are you much hurt?" he asked.

"O no! A little bruised about the hips, that is all. Meg come down rather hard, and the pain took away my senses. Poor thing, she'll never fall again, I should n't care, if they had n't killed her!"

"They!" So, he was ignorant that Robert had fired the bullet.

"When shall we start?" asked the Sergeant.

"Whenever you like. When the men are rested. Send breakfast to me and the boy, and take Mr. Holley with you. Treat him with respect and kindness."

"And how'll ye travil, Cap'n?" asked the Sergeant. "Der ye think thet leg o' yourn kin mount a nag?"

"I'm afraid not, to-day. Can you get a wagon and harness about here?"

"I have them, sir," said the blacksmith, now speaking for the first time since his capture. "Of course you can take them, but I gladly consent to it."

"I thank you," answered the trooper, "I am sorry to see you as you are, sir."

The blacksmith smiled, but made no reply, and soon followed the Sergeant from the building.

When they were gone, the Captain said to James, "Now, my boy, tell me where you have been, and how you happened to be taken. Do you know it is lucky you were, for without me you could never have got to the Union lines?"

James then told him all his adventures, except his encounter with the guide, and with Robert and old

Katy. When he finished, the trooper asked, "And did you see anything of the boy?"

"Yes, he overtook me on the road to the cabin. I hope he is by this time at home with his grandmother."

He hoped this, but he feared, from the questions the slave boy had asked the guide in the woods, that he was even then following the trooper, intent on accomplishing the savage work in which he had been foiled. James thought the Captain safe, surrounded by his men; and he did not wish to wound him by disclosing the bitter feelings of Robert; so to avoid the subject he turned the conversation into another channel. "What will become of the blacksmith?" he asked.

"He will be hanged without judge or jury. He has been a spy, and, besides, Mosby has some private grudge against him. It is a pity, for he is an old hero. He killed three of our men, wounded another, and sent poor Meg to her long home. We know that, because the man with him had only a shot-gun."

"He deserves something better than death," said James. "When he might have defended himself, he gave up to save the lives of the children."

"I know, and I'm sorry; but nothing can save

him. Words would be wasted on Mosby. He would hang him for killing the mare, if for nothing else; for he loved her as well as I did."

Again changing the conversation,—this time because it was painful,—James said: "I noticed her. She seemed a noble animal."

"Noble! She was the best horse in Virginia. She knew everything, and had a heart like a woman. She loved me as a dog loves his master, and I loved her better than some men love their children. For two years we were together, day and night, summer and winter; and often, when I have laid down on the march in a pelting storm, she has stood over me all night to keep off the rain, when every other horse in the squad has been on the ground sleeping. Twice she saved my life, and once the whole battalion."

"How was that?" asked the boy, catching some of the trooper's enthusiasm.

"We were on a raid into Pennsylvania, and were chased by three Yankee regiments. The troop had ridden hard for forty miles, and, thinking there was no immediate danger, we halted just after midnight to rest the men and horses. Meg then belonged to Mosby; and, hitching her to a rail, he lay down in a crotch of the fence, and fell asleep before I had

dismounted. I soon noticed the mare with her mouth at Mosby's throat, shaking him hard, and tearing his coat into ribbons. I pulled her away; but she pawed the ground violently, and, when I attempted to tie her, came at me like a hyena. Seeing I could n't manage her, I woke Mosby, and pointing to the breast of his coat, said, 'Colonel, in a moment more Meg would have spoiled your portrait!' He looked at his coat, then at me, and, half asleep and half dead with fatigue, roared out in a great rage, 'Captain, that—that—is my horse, and this—this—is my face, and I'd thank ye to—at—tend to your own business.'

"I flew into a passion, and gave him a volley of hard words; but, in the midst of it, he put his ear to the ground, and said: 'Hark! What is that?' I bent down and listened, and, sounding far away, heard the faint tread of cavalry. It was the Yankees, and so Meg's ears saved the battalion! When we got back to Virginia, Mosby gave her to me, to atone, he said, for not treating me like a gentleman."

"It is not strange you valued her highly," said James, proceeding to devour a portion of the hard-tack which now came in for breakfast.

"Valued her!" echoed the trooper. "I loved her.

and she made a better man of me. After I lost the boy's mother, I grew hard and reckless : but when I got Meg, my nature seemed to soften, and there came back to me some human feeling. I used to let her run loose about the camp, and many a time, when I have gone off by myself, and sat down overwhelmed with a sense of utter wretchedness, she has come to me, put her face down to mine and fondled me, as if she had been my mother. At such times a look so tender and pitiful would come into her eyes, that I would fancy she had a human soul, and was throwing her love about me, to keep off the fiends that were hounding me to madness. It was not so, but then I did not understand, for my eyes were shut and my mind was dark ; but now I know there is a great spirit in all things, which answers love with love, hate with hate ; to the good gives comfort and hope, to the bad only despair and a fearful looking-for of retribution. You may not understand this now, but you will when you are a man, and have suffered."

"Mother has told me so, in other words," answered the boy. "She says that great spirit is God, that he is a Father to all, loves all, even the worst, and is always trying to do them good ; but that bad men do not know it, because the evil in their hearts shuts his love out, and makes Him seem to them only a God of terror and vengeance."

"It is so, boy; and I might have been saved all these years of wretchedness and sin, if some one had told me of it as your mother has told you. Hannah felt it in her heart, but she did not know it with her mind. I thought it was my love that held her up; but now I see it was God's love which made her so gentle, so patient, and so forgiving under all the misery my evil courses brought upon her. If I had known it, my life would have been different; but, perhaps, it was better as it was; for my experience may enable me to help others. The soldier must be drilled, the workman must be taught, and my life may have taught me how to drag such men as I have been from the mire of vice in which I have wallowed."

"It has; and you can do it," said the boy; "you can do it!"

"I will if God gives me life and strength. I promised I would last night, when I laid here, supposed to be dead."

"I thought you were dead. I watched you till I saw the men bring in a board, as if to take you out to be buried."

"O yes, I remember; that was only to bolster my head, so I might get the air. I knew all that happened, though I seemed unconscious."

“How could that be?”

“I don’t know. It was very strange, — like a dream. No doubt it was a dream; but it seemed as real as anything that ever happened. As soon as I fell, I felt my senses going. I spoke to you, then I prayed, and then a strong hand seemed to grasp my arm, as if to draw me away. I struggled, for I was not willing to go; but soon my strength gave out, my senses swam, and all became darkness. I knew I was not dead, for I could hear the voices of the men, and soon could see them taking my body into the barn; yet I thought I was not there, but had another body just like the one I had left, and was floating in the air above their heads. I watched them pour the brandy down my mouth, and wet my face and forehead, and heard them bewail my death; and then I thought I would go back and say a kind word to the poor fellows. I tried to go, but the strong hand held me, and, in a moment more the clouds around broke away, and there seemed about me another sky and another world, all filled with happy human beings. Waving fields and blossoming orchards and pleasant gardens and great woods and running streams were in it; but it was not like this world any more than the sunshine is like the shadow. Perhaps it was the sunshine of which this world is the

shadow. Soon, I thought, a voice spoke my name, and, turning round, I saw her, — the boy's mother, — not as she once was, but as she is now, among the angels. I shrank away, not daring to look at her ; but she came to me, took me in her arms and laid my head on her bosom.

“‘These many years,’ she said, ‘I have waited for you, and soon you will come and be with me forever. It is given you to see our glorious home ; for in the great struggle you at last have conquered.’ Then she led me away past pleasant hamlets and happy homes, far into the blue distance. We did not walk, we did not fly, but we moved as, perhaps, a thought moves, when it pierces the deep heavens. Soon we reached a beautiful place, where my father and mother were waiting. They welcomed me with many tears, put their arms about my neck, and gave me their blessing. The place was not like any I had ever seen ; and yet it seemed what my boyish dreams had pictured of heaven. Suddenly, as we stood there, I thought the ground opened beneath me, and I saw a vast arid plain, dotted with innumerable wretched hovels. They were not like houses on the earth, but were transparent, and in every one a score of haggard, deathly-looking men and women were gaming and carousing. My father

spoke: 'They, my son,' he said, 'are what you have been; and with them lies your work in the future. Those who come up here must toil for every step of their progress.'

"'Let me go to them,' I said. 'I can feel what they feel, and now can tell them what they may attain to.'

"'Not now,' he answered, 'your life on the earth is not yet ended.'

"Then I thought the clouds closed about me, and—I awoke on this heap of straw, the men all standing around. When I opened my eyes, they set up a wild hurrah, and the Sergeant cried out, 'Glory! Hallelujah! we thought you was gone, Capt'n; but the breath o' life is in ye, and ye'll be good yit fur forty raidin's.'

"Then I knew that I had only been dreaming."

"It was a strange dream," said James. "Do you think it had any meaning?"

"I don't know. Perhaps it was a glimpse into the unseen,—a foreshadowing of my future. God sometimes gives such things to men, but generally on the approach of death; and, somehow, I feel that my life here is nearly over."

"I hope not," said the boy. "There is so much you can do. You have talents and education which fit you to work in reforming others."

"I neither hope nor fear," answered the trooper. "I am resigned to whatever may happen. That dream has unsealed my eyes, and shown me that God is all right and all goodness; and I am content that he shall do with me as he will, and only want to work for him, here or there, in the lowest station."

So that wretched, sin-laden man found what all the world is seeking,—rest and peace,—which no one truly finds till, like him, he realizes that God is "our FATHER."

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE ROAD.

THEY set out about an hour after breakfast. A cavalry horse was hitched to an open spring wagon, and in it—a portion of the troop going before, and the remainder bringing up the rear—James and the Captain rolled slowly along toward Mosby's camp in the mountains. The Sergeant rode on one side of the vehicle, and the blacksmith, mounted on a blooded animal which had been the property of one of the men he had killed, rode on the other. His horse was tethered to the vehicle, and his feet were secured by a rope tied under the saddle.

It was a beautiful day, neither hot nor cold, but of that delightful temperature which gives a keen zest to the mere act of living. The soft breath of July stirred the grass, and the birds sang in the tall trees by the wayside. A rich green mantle covered the ground, and countless flowers bloomed in the meadows; but fences were upturn, crops trodden down, dwellings dismantled, and over

everything hung the shadow of a great desolation. The dark devil of War had passed that way, and left his bloody footprint on every field, his red hand on every hamlet and homestead.

About noon they passed the ruins of a large mansion. Great oaks and evergreens, charred up to their topmost branches, stood before its doorway, and a profusion of roses, jessamines, and honeysuckles, growing free and wild, made a fragrant wilderness of its court-yard.

"Whose house was this?" asked the Captain of the blacksmith, who till then had ridden along in silence.

"Judge Burwell's. It was burned by some of your men about a year ago; and at the same time they murdered two of his children."

The Captain winced a little, but answered coolly, "I did n't hear of it,—I was away in Pennsylvania. How was it?"

"The Judge had fled to the Union lines; and one night about twenty of your gang came to the house and demanded the money and other valuables of his family. Mrs. Burwell gave them up—everything, even the wedding-ring on her finger; and your men left, but only to go to the barn, gather some straw, and build a fire at every corner

of the building. Seven persons — three women and four children — were in the house, and as soon as they saw the blaze, they attempted to escape from the door; but your devils ordered them back with the threat of instant shooting. Mrs. Burwell, from one of the windows, begged not to be burned alive, and the leader told her to come out, promising her protection; but she had no sooner started than a bullet broke her arm at the elbow. Seeing it was death by burning or shooting, they covered themselves with beds and blankets, and attempted to run the gauntlet. Five escaped, — the three women, and two of the children, — but two fine boys, who were to have upheld the old man's honored name, were shot dead at the rear of the mansion."

"It was a fiendish act," said the Captain; "but, I am sorry to say, I have heard of others quite as bad, — quite as worthy of hanging."

The blacksmith looked at him with some surprise, but only said: "It *was* fiendish, and unwise into the bargain. If you go on at this rate, you'll leave none of the chivalry alive in Virginia."

"How so? I thought we all were chivalry," answered the trooper, smiling.

"Of the bogus sort, not of the genuine race.

There are not twenty of the old families now left in the State. Your leading men are all sprung from sewers and dunghills. Jeff Davis's father ran away from Tennessee, to avoid arrest for horse-stealing; Barnwell Rhett's was an Irish clodhopper; Robert Toombs's,—as his name shows,—a grave-digger; and the original ancestor of the Wise family was sold for a hundred pounds of tobacco to pay his passage from an English prison!"*

The Captain laughed as he answered: "You are treading on my corns, Mr. Holley. I profess to belong to a good family; and, seriously, you must know that the South has some of the best blood in the world."

"That depends on what you call good blood," said the blacksmith. "I think a man none the better because his grandfather happened to hold a king's stirrup, or be the husband of a king's mistress."

"Perhaps not; but breeding goes a long ways. You admit it in hounds and horses, why not in men and women?"

* There is more truth than poetry in these statements of the blacksmith. The original document which conveyed the ancestor of the turbulent ex-Governor of Virginia to a planter for enough tobacco to pay his passage from a London jail is now in the library of Mr. Peter Force at Washington.

"I do. An honest father makes an honest son. I boast of my own blood. My father feared God, paid his debts, and made the best horse-shoes in this county. Character, not station, the man, not his clothes, are the things to brag about in an ancestor."

"You stole that idea from Cowper," said the Captain, again laughing. "You know" he said,

'My boast is not that I deduce my birth
From loins enthroned, and rulers of the earth;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise, —
The child of parents passed into the skies.'

"That can't be said by many of the chivalry. If accounts are true, few of their parents knew there was any such region as heaven."

"Come, come, Mr. Holley," responded the Captain, gravely, "I am a good-natured man, and you can say what you please; but let us talk as we think."

"I do," answered the blacksmith. "I say what I think, and should do it, if you were Jeff Davis himself. I know that nineteen twentieths of the chivalry are sprung from beggars, thieves, and cut-throats, who were transported here as paupers and criminals; and that the best blood of the South is with the honest lower classes, the 'mean trash,' and 'poor whites,' as you call them, because they

do what God meant they should do,—work for a living.”

“And what, in your calculation, becomes of the Huguenots and Cavaliers?”

“There were n’t enough of them to salt your porridge. About seven hundred Huguenots were sent over to Virginia by King William. They founded a town, and built a church, which is still standing, on James River; but within ten years they left there to be rid of bad neighbors, and went into North Carolina, where they settled on Pamlico Sound, and the Neuse and Trent Rivers. About the same number were sent to South Carolina by Charles II.; and they are about all that came to this country. For a century they lived by themselves, refusing to mix or marry with the other planters; and when they finally did, they sunk to their level. There are now not over a dozen old Huguenot names among the Southern aristocracy; the rest are where they ought to be, among the honest working people. As for the Cavaliers,—they were mostly seedy adventurers, broken-down gentry, or portionless younger sons of my Lord Played-out, who begged for his dinner. They left their country for their country’s good; but there was not a baker’s dozen of them all told,—not enough to do any good or any harm anywhere.”

"You seem to talk by the book," said the Captain, smiling incredulously.

"I do," answered the blacksmith. "I spent a week of nights among the old books in the Judge's library, expressly to get facts to floor our popinjay of a representative, who used to brag about his ancestors as if they were first cousins to the Angel Gabriel. I got the facts, and they floored him. I tell you, the first settlers of the South were a decidedly sorry set."

"They must have been shabby enough, by your showing."

"They were the very offscouring of all things. The early settlers of Georgia were from the English jails and poor-houses. The promoters of Oglethorpe's colony openly said in the English prints: 'Our prisons are full of miserable men, useless to all the purposes of society. What shall we do with these miserable, useless, pernicious inhabitants? We will erect a new kingdom out of the refuse of our own people and the subjects of neighboring nations.' Nine tenths of the early settlers of South Carolina were wretched, half-starved peasants from the bogs of Ireland. They came over in such swarms that the northern part of that country was almost depopulated. And as to Virginia, for fifty years it was a penal

colony, and into it was emptied all the filth of London. Fifty thousand convicts came here; and one half of our 'first families' to-day bear the names which those men left on the records of the Old Bailey. An English historian who wrote a hundred and twenty years ago said: 'Our plantations in America, New England excepted, have been generally settled, first, by malcontents with the administration from time to time; second, by fraudulent debtors, as a refuge from their creditors, and by convicts and criminals who chose transportation rather than death.'* The malcontents and Huguenots were the righteous men who saved this Sodom. They salted, and so saved the lump; but there were not enough of them to leaven such an immense mass of filth."

"Well," said the Captain, laughing again, "you have floored me, as you floored Boteler. You have day and date at your fingers' ends; so you must be right. By your account, none of us can brag of our ancestors; we are all sprung from sorry vagabonds."

* Dr. William Douglass, 1749. Those who like to wade in muddy water, and desire to trace a dirty stream to its dirty source, may find something more about the origin of the "chivalry" in Martin's and Hawks's Histories of North Carolina, Carroll's South Carolina, Campbell's Virginia, and White's Historical Collections of Georgia.

“Not all of us. These men were the early settlers, who came here first, took up the best lands, founded large estates, and became the fathers of the chivalry. The most of us are sprung from the later settlers, — the brave, hardy, industrious Scotch, Scotch-Irish, and English yeomen, who tilled the land, loved their wives, taught their children, ‘feared God, and kept their powder dry.’ You can tell one from the other at this day, as easily as you can tell a Morgan horse from a monkey.”

“How?”

“One obeys the laws, and does something; works with his hands or his head for his daily bread. The other breaks all laws, and does nothing, either steals or gambles for a living, or wrings it from the bloody sweat of his fellows, — men who, in all that God counts manhood, are as much above him as the Apostle John was above the traitor Judas.”

“Well, the adage is, ‘Like father, like son,’ — there may be some truth in what you say.”

“Some truth! It is all truth. The chivalry are only the felons dressed up in fine clothes, put astride of a blooded horse, and loaded down with the evil deeds of two centuries. They have shown the convict’s nature all through our history; and yet they, the vilest white men on this planet, have ruled the

South for two hundred years, and this whole country for sixty."

"Thet ar' true, Mr. Holley," now said the Sergeant, who had listened with interest to the whole of this conversation. "But this war ar' a gwine ter end thet sort o' business. It 'll guv a chance ter the pore man as does the wuck, and fights the battles."

"Well, it won't if your side wins," answered the blacksmith. "It will tie you down, hand and foot; and you 'll not get up till doomsday."

"Ye hain't right thar, sartin," said the Sergeant, smiling; "and I reckon ye 'se wrong too 'bout whar the chivalry cum frum."

"How so?" asked the blacksmith. "Where did they come from?"

"I don't know; but I 'se yered the old darky's account, and I reckon it 'r truer nur the history. He says it wus this away: 'Ye sees, all de fuss folk — Adam, and Eve, and Cain, and Abel, and Genesis, and Deuteronomy, and all dem ole fellers — wus brack. But Cain he kill his brudder wid a big club, — his walkin'-stick, — and de Lord he kim down ter see 'bout it, and he say ter Cain: "Cain, whar am dy brudder?"

"'Den Cain he put out his lip, and he say, "I doan't know, — what 'm you axin' me fur? I hain't my brudder's keeper!"

“‘Den de Lord he gits in ’arnest, and he stomps on de groun’, and he say: “Cain! you Cain, whar am dy brudder, — I say you, Cain, whar am dy brudder Abel?”

“‘Now, de way de Lord say dat frighten Cain, and he turn white in de face, — whiter dan ginned cotton, — dat wus de mark de Lord sot on him, — and de hull race ob Cain hab been white eber sense. Den Cain he wus druv out o’ Paradise, and went and settled in de land ob Nod; and from dar he moved inter Soufh Car’lina, and — dat ’s whar all de chiv’urly kim frum.’” *

A hearty laugh followed this anecdote, and it ended the conversation. About an hour after nightfall the troop halted for the night at an old church near a cross-roads.

* This tradition, in a garbled form, found its way into print, about ten years ago, in a book whose title I do not now remember. However, the Sergeant cannot be accused of plagiarism; for I myself heard it at the South when a boy, and it has been current — and widely believed — among the Southern negroes for more than a century. The reader, of course, will believe it or not, at his option. I simply insist that it is nearer the truth than the generally received account, which makes the chivalry the descendants of the Cavaliers and Huguenots.

CHAPTER XII.

THE OLD MEETING-HOUSE.

THE old church was on a spur of the Blue Ridge, a few miles to the south of Flint Hill, and at a point where one of the ribs of the long mountain range falls away to the rolling ground below, known as the Piedmont region. A circuit of country, broad as the eye can take in, is there covered with dense forests; and, scattered here and there among them, are little openings, where nestle the rude huts of the simple dwellers in that region.

They are a homespun people, knowing little of books, having crude notions of life, and forcing only a scanty subsistence from the woods and streams with their nets and rifles, or from sorry patches of corn and tobacco, with hoes as heavy as a man can handle, and as old as the-days of the first Abraham; but they speak the truth, practise virtue, respect one another's rights, love their country—as only those love it for whom it has done nothing, and may—in the scales by which Infinite Justice measures the worth of men—outweigh all the chivalry that

have lived since the first Cavalier went on horseback.

It is a stony, sterile region ; but there these simple people lived, content and happy, until the conscript officer came among them, and tore them from their rude homes to do battle against their country. Since their oldest man was a boy, they had come every Sunday to that little church to hear the glad tidings from the other world, and—the latest news from this, read after service by the country parson from the country newspaper ; but now they were scattered far and wide, some in Northern prisons, and some on bloody fields, seeing this strange world about which they had wondered, or sleeping the quiet sleep which on this earth knows no waking.

And their fate was written on the rude building where they had worshipped. It was a ruin, desolate and bare as a tree which has been blasted by the lightning. Its floor was upturned, its roof partly fallen in, and its battered door rusting idly on its hinges. Around its peaceful walls blood had flowed, and fierce men had struggled, scarring its crumbling logs with deadly missiles, and doing the deeds of hell within the very vestibule of heaven.

The troop alighted, and, tethering their horses among the trees, entered the old building. A few

rough benches were scattered about its interior, and at one end was a huge chimney, at the other, a low platform on which had stood the rude pulpit. Spreading some blankets on this platform, the rangers laid the Captain upon them, and then, gathering some pine knots from the surrounding woods, built a fire on the hearth, and over it hung a couple of camp-kettles, filled with rye coffee, and borrowed bacon. When the repast was ready, they clustered about the fire, on the ground, or on the rough log benches, and made a hearty meal, washing it down with water from a spring hard by, or with a more fiery fluid which they carried in the canteens that were slung over their shoulders.

A few of them were of what is called at the South "the better class of society"; but much the larger number were evidently young workingmen, sons of honest farmers, who had been tempted to this wild life by the love of adventure or the prospect of plunder. Some of them had stolid, expressionless faces, and some were rough and reckless looking; but nearly all seemed careless and good-natured, fond of fun and frolic, and not the abandoned characters we are accustomed to think of when we speak of Mosby's rangers. I suspect that very few people are as bad as they are painted by

their enemies ; and I have found, under the rough exterior of some of the worst of men, often slumbering the best feelings of humanity.

When the rangers had gathered about the blazing fire, which, without giving out much heat, lit up every nook and cranny of the ruined building, one of them said to the blacksmith, who had thrown himself on the ground in a corner, "Come yere, Mr. Holley. Hev suthin' ter eat ; ye'll need all the muscle ye kin muster afore this time ter-morrer."

The blacksmith rose, and, coming forward slowly, — for the cords had been tightened about his ankles, — took a seat on one of the rough benches near the Sergeant. As he came 'out into the fire-light, the Captain noticed that his wrists also were bound, and called out to the men, "Undo his hands. Don't tie him as you would an ox you were going to slaughter."

The blacksmith smiled at this allusion, but simply thanked the trooper as the men undid the ligatures. While this was being done, the man who had first spoken, said to the Sergeant, —

"I say, Sargint, doan't ye remember this ole meetin'-'ouse, and the brush we hed yere with the Yankee calvary?"

"I does. I never shill forgit it, nur the boy's look, ef I lives ter be as old as Methuselah," answered the Sergeant.

"Which one, — ourn, or the t'other?"

"The t'other. When we come in yere ter-night, while uverything war dark, afore the fire war kindled, I thort I seed him jest as plain as ef he war living."

"Seed him! Whar?" echoed three or four voices.

"Off thar, in the corner," and — while with startled look, every eye turned in the direction — the Sergeant pointed to a ragged opening in the wall, where lay a little heap of earth, on which some thin, sickly grass was growing.

"Yas," said the other speaker, "thet 's whar the Cap'n's lad war buried. P'r'aps the t'other one haunts the place, 'case the death of thet boy guv him the halter."

"How was it? Why was he hung?" now asked another of the rangers.

"Well, ye sees," said the Sergeant, "Captain Slack and some thirty on us hed been a scoutin' in the Valley; and one day, about two year ago, come yere ter camp fur the night, jest afore sundown. We did n't post no pickets, 'case we had no idee thar was ary Yankees round; but we hed n't more 'n

sot down ter our grub, afore fifty o' the devils come onter us, stole our nags, and peppered us wuss nur ye uver peppered yer bacon. Hòwsum-uver, luckily like, we 'd took our carbines inter the building, and arter the fust surprise, squatted ahind the logs and guv them as good as they sent, and — a little better. They stood up like men; but thirty ahind logs is more 'n fifty afore 'em, and arter a while they skedaddled. They killed one o' us, — the Captain's son; and we winged one o' them, — shot him from his nag jest as the rest broke away inter the timber. He war a loikely lad, — not more 'n seventeen, — with soft hands, a white skin, and a face jest loike a 'ooman's. The hit war a bad 'un, and the boy war apt ter die anyhow; but the Captain went clean mad with the death uv his son, and swore we should hang him. I helt out ag'in it, sayin' the lad war a dyin'; but it war n't no use, it only made the Captain hurry up the faster. He rigged a halter out o' the boy's own bridle, and then — hung him ter the limb uv a tree yonder. I holped the boy ter the tree, — out o' pity I done it, — and spoke kind ter him when they was a fixin' on the halter. He said no words, but he guv me a look, — jest sich a look as my mother guv me when she war dyin'. The

same face and the same look I seed when I come in yere, as plain as I seed 'em thet minnit."

"Your memory got into your eyes, Sergeant," said the blacksmith. "That was all. That boy died for his country; and those who die so, are at rest after death—in heaven."

"And don't you believe the spirits of the dead visit the earth?" now asked another man,—one of the more intelligent looking of the troop. "What are they but men? and don't they retain the feelings of men? We linger in memory around certain places; and why don't they, in person, since they are disembodied, and can travel like thought,—in a flash all over creation."

"All the ghosts ever heard of," answered the blacksmith, "have been supposed to be spirits of murdered men, haunting the spots where they were murdered. That can't be, if spirits have the feelings of men. We do not seek places where we have suffered,—our memories cling to things with pleasant, not with terrible associations."

"And may not the associations here be pleasant to the Yankee boy?" said the other. "Is not the Sergeant here? and did n't he speak kindly to him, and stand by him when he was dying?"

"Yes," said the Sergeant, who evidently thought

the vision a reality. "And, I tell ye, when I come in yere, he guv me the same look—half sorry, half lovin'—thet he guv me the last minit he sot eyes on me."

"Pshaw! It's all humbug," now said another of the troopers. "Fur why? 'case the Yankee boy would n't leave heaven, if he could, it's too comfortable a place; and he could n't leave Tophet, ef he would,—'case thar 's no gittin' out o' thar, ef it ar' anything loike the place I onst got inter."

"And what sort uv a place war thet?" asked the Sergeant with an uncertain smile, as if curious and yet fearful to hear.

"Well, ye sees, I wus ter a camp-meetin' down ter North Carolina, whar I wus raised, and a long-eared, long-haired specimen uv a critter had been a sendin' all on us as did n't shout 'Glory!' sing through the nose, and go inter conniption fits under his preachin', down ter the hot place; which he said was hot a'r, hot water, hot coals, hot rocks, hot lava, and hot volcanoes, all mixed together and poured inter a big crater, shaped loike a tea-kettle, and big as the univarse, and simmerin', and boilin', and burnin' forever.

"I laughed at the idee, fur I know'd the feller did n't know no more 'bout it nur I done; and I

took my supper, and lay down ter sleep in one on the tents. The supper was cold corn pone, and half-sp'iled bacon, and thet, or the sarmunt, must ha' sot hard on my stomach; fur, I hed n't more 'n got asleep, 'fore I woke up in the very place whar the Parson had sent the sinners. Sure 'nuff, it *war* a hot place, — hotter 'n fire, and yit colder 'n Greenland, and darker 'n pitch, and yit lighter 'n forty sun-shines, — so light thet a pious man could ha' read the Bible in it without glasses.

"All around its sides wus big holes loike ovens; and inter 'em, jest so fast as they come in, the devils wus a throwin' the sinners. One on 'em grabbed me, but I fit him off, and, somehow, got round ter the very middle uv the volcano."

"I kin b'lieve thet," said the Sergeant. "I 'se allers said ye wus the best fighter in the troop."

"Thanks ye, Sargint," said the man. "My fight-in' powers stood me in then, no mistake; and I reckon none on us, when we gits ter thet ar' place, won't be sorry he b'longed ter Mosby's gang. The practice the Cunnel guvs us 'll come right handy, down thar."

No one seemed to relish the idea of pursuing his vocation in so warm a latitude, and the trooper went on with his dream.

“Wall, as I said, somehow I got ter the middle uv the place, and right thar wus a oven bigger’n all the rest, as the king devil wus a tendin’. He wus a pitchin’ in the miserable sinners, as fast as they come along; and I could see thar arms, and legs, and bodies, a-twistin’ and squirmin’ about in the hot fire, — fryin’ and roastin’, but nuver burnin’ up, ’case, ye sees, thar flesh and blood war n’t mortal. Fur long I could n’t git my eyes from the fire, fur it charmed me loike a snake; but at last I looked round at the king devil, and — would you b’lieve it — it was the long-haired parson hisself! I wus dumfounded fur a minnit, but then I helt out my hand ter him, and says I, ‘Hullo! old Longlocks, be this ye? I thort ye wus up thar ter the camp-meeting?’

“‘Wall, I wus,’ he said, guvin’ me a warm grip, — his hand wus fire. ‘I stays up thar in the day-time, a-ropin’ on ’em in; but I comes down yere at night ter see they gits well roasted.’

“A few more civil words passed atween us, and then he grabbed me by the shoulder. I fit hard, — ye’d better b’lieve it, — but it war n’t no use. He had the strength uv forty men, and, in less nur a minnit, had me in the oven. The roastin’ woke me up, and the sweat was a-rollin’ off me jest loike

a river. Well, the next day I got up in the camp-meetin', and telled the dream. It broke up the meetin', and thet parson—he niver wus seed ag'in in them parts, I reckon."

When the man ended, a suppressed laugh went around the benches, but it was as low and broken as the whistle of a boy when he is trying to bolster up his courage. The wild and horrible dream, or the supposed apparition of the murdered boy, had worked on the untutored imaginations of those ignorant men, terrifying them more than they would have been willing to acknowledge.

The blacksmith was the first to break the silence which followed. "It was a dreadful dream, stranger," he said; "but I have heard much more dreadful sermons. They have a bad effect on the minds of the ignorant; for they make them believe there are such places in the universe, and that God, who is all love, delights in the torment of his creatures. It is not so. God is a father. He corrects us as we correct our children, to reform, not to destroy us. We suffer no more, here or hereafter, than is needed to discipline us for the great work of life, which in this world has only its beginning."

"Then ye don't b'lieve in the place the parsons tell on?" said the Sergeant, drawing a long breath, as if relieved of a nightmare.

“Not in a burning lake and everlasting fire. Those are figurative expressions. Bad men no doubt suffer after death; and the torment they endure is probably as hard for the spirit to bear, as life in a burning lake would be for the body. But God does not bring it upon them. They bring it upon themselves, by living out of harmony with nature and the laws of God. Take away a drunkard’s drink, and he will tell you he is in hell. Let a man bring upon himself any severe disease, and he will suffer terribly. Why? Because he has abused his body, acted contrary to its laws, and so must feel the suffering which is the consequence of its disorder. As it is with the body, so it is with the spirit; only the spirit, being finer and more sensitive than the body, feels more keenly and suffers more intensely.”

“And what must a man do, Mr. Holley,” asked the Sergeant, “to keep himself in order?”

“Act up to his highest idea of right; set that above money, friends, life, everything, — even his children. He must sow what he wants to reap, and if he sows good seed, he *will* reap a hundred-fold — in the garden of God forever.”

The old man’s face took on a strange glow as he said this, — a glow not of the fire-light; and the rude men around stared at him with a look of mingled awe and admiration.

"What's right ter one hain't right ter another," said the Sergeant after a moment. "You and us differ 'bout thet, Mr. Holley, or you would n't be a-wearin' them bracelets."

"True. Every man must go by his own conscience. Yours tells you it is right to fight against your country; mine tells me it is wrong, that what God hath joined together no man should put asunder. I am going to die for being of this opinion; but in that I reckon myself no better than you. I simply give my life for what I think is right; you every day risk yours for the same thing."

No one spoke for a few moments; but after a while the blacksmith, looking up with a quiet smile, said, "Speaking of camp-meetings reminds me of one I went to when I was little more than a boy. It was held in a woods not far from my father's house, and a thousand people had been attending it all the week; but I had not gone, for I had a prejudice against the high-pressure religion which is usually found at such places. I had noticed that everything takes its time to grow, and that what comes quickly generally goes quickly; besides, I thought I should be serving God quite as well by making horse-shoes as by groaning and shouting like an organ-bellows. But on the next Sunday, our little church was closed,

and, having nowhere else to go, I went to the camp-meeting.

“A half-dozen preachers were on the platform, and the people were scattered about under the trees, listening to one of them, who was holding forth in a voice like a clap of thunder.

“He was a long, lank, dyspeptic-looking man, and the disorder in his stomach seemed to have got into his head; for he stormed away in a terrible fashion, using the most extravagant gestures, and language that would have been thought the worst profanity, if spoken anywhere out of a pulpit. At first he got upon the immensity of the universe, the height of the mountains, the length of the rivers, and the size of the great lakes, — all of which he mentioned by name, — and then, at a single bound, came down on the sinners. He spoke of the enormity of sin, and the awful fate of the sinner, as if the subject were pleasant to him; and then described the bad place, very much as our friend here saw it in his dream. When he got down there he imitated the cries and groans of the wicked as naturally as if he had spent a lifetime among them.

“In the course of the sermon the larger part of the people got worked up to the highest pitch of excitement, and on nearly every face was the very

agony of despair. When he began, many shouted 'Amen!' and 'Praise the Lord!' at the end of about every sentence; but as he went on they sprang to their feet, shrieking, and groaning, and crying out for help, and going into all manner of writhings and contortions, until at last many of them fell down in a dead stupor.

"This lasted for half an hour, and by that time fully a hundred whites and blacks—for all there were equal—were on the ground, apparently senseless. A vague horror and dread seemed to be in the air, and sweeping like a gale of wind over the people, taking away their reason. I braced myself against it; but, spite of all I could do, it affected me like a nightmare.

"At last the fellow sat down; and an old, venerable man, with long, white hair, and a most benevolent countenance, rose, and came to the front of the platform. He looked around on the people for a moment, and then, with a gesture of mild rebuke, turned to the other preacher, and said: 'God is love; and he that loveth not knoweth not God; for GOD IS LOVE.'

"Then, turning again to the assemblage, he added: 'He doth not willingly afflict, nor grieve the children of men; but in all our afflictions he is afflicted, and the chastisement of our peace is upon him.'

"The effect of these words was indescribable, — though it was not so much the words as the tone, the look, and manner of the old man. They were to the people like rain to the parched ground; or like the voice of the Lord, saying to the sea, 'Peace, be still!'

"In a moment all was quiet, and he went on. 'I am an old man,' he said, 'my body is almost worn out; but I cannot lift an arm, or draw a breath, or make a movement, that does not give me pleasure. Why? Because God created us in love, and meant we should be happy. And if he created us in love, will he destroy us in anger? No, my children! His wrath abideth but for a day, — his love endureth for all generations. For a little moment he afflicts us, but with everlasting mercy he will save us, and gather us into his kingdom forever. While we sin we suffer, and the suffering is in the sinning; but put away the sin, and the suffering will cease, and in its place will come the peace which passeth all understanding.'

"And so the old man went on, the love he talked of beaming from every look of his eye, and every lineament of his features, and soon every cheek was wet, but every face was happy. I had heard sermons before, but never any that affected me as that did.

Every word of it seemed alive ; and the love of God, which before had been to me only a shadowy nothing, became a glowing reality.

“When the old man finished he came down among the people, speaking kindly to first one and then another, and at last, coming to where I was seated. Hardly knowing what I did, I told him what I thought of the sermon. His eye lighted up, and taking me by the arm he said, ‘Young man, come and take dinner with me.’

“I went into his tent, sat down on his blanket, and ate with him. He asked me all about myself, how old I was, (I was eighteen,) where I lived, and what was my occupation. I told him, and then he said, ‘Be content with your station. Paul was a tent-maker, John a fisherman, and the Lord of all had not where to lay his head. The poor man may be of as much use in the world as the rich one. Do not seek riches. Seek only to do your duty, and never forget what you have heard to-day, that “God is love.” Fifty years ago I found it out, and ever since, though I have been hungry, and thirsty, and poor, and naked, I have been rich, — richer than many a man who has a million.’

“The old man’s kindly way put me at my ease, and I asked him his name, and where he lived. He

told me, and something about his history. It was old Father Jeanott ;—you have heard of him,—the great evangelist, who for fifty years carried the cross of Christ into every corner of this Southern country.

. “He was one of the genuine chivalry. He came of those Huguenots who settled on the Neuse in 1708, and inherited his Methodism from his mother, who remembered John Wesley’s passing a night at her father’s house, and preaching there more than a century before. He engaged in privateering on a little schooner of forty tons towards the close of the Revolutionary War, when he was a boy of only fifteen. The schooner was chased by an English cutter, and, after a hard-fought battle, was captured and taken into Charleston. As he was only a boy, he was allowed to go at large, and soon, aided by an old negro, effected his escape. He made his way to a Whig settlement on the Santee, and in a few days, joined the band of Marion, the partisan general of the Revolution. One of his comrades, when not on duty, was always reading his Bible, and in a brush with the British at Georgetown was mortally wounded. Jeanott helped him upon a horse, and got him safely away ; but the man was dying. All he could do when they laid him on the ground was to gasp, ‘God is love,’ and point to his Bible, which

was in the breast of his coat. Jeanott took it out and opened it at the first chapter of John. The man put his finger on the twelfth verse, smiled on the boy, looked upwards, and died.

“Up to this time Jeanott had been a wild youth, but this affected him as his sermon affected me. He went home when the war ended, and studied the Bible the trooper had left him. Soon all over it he found written, ‘God is love.’ The thought sank so deep in his soul that he wanted all the world to know it; and so he took to preaching. He was sent as a missionary to the new settlements in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, where many grown men had never seen a preacher, and many children had never heard of a God, or a Redeemer. Day and night for many years he worked among those people. Often he waded his horse through trackless swamps, or swam it across deep rivers, and often laid down in the woods, with his saddle-bags for a pillow, and spent the night with the reptiles crawling and the wolves howling all about him. But all these things he endured joyfully, ‘seeing Him who is invisible.’ Like St. Paul, he thought his life of no account, but to do the work of the Master.

“In his time, he probably preached to more people than any man living; but for all his ministra-

tions he never received a dollar. His profession of land-surveyor supplied his few wants, and what more he earned he gave to the poor. He was a true apostle of the lowly Christ, preaching his Gospel — which in his mouth was really ‘the glad tidings’ — to the outcast and the down-trodden, and never holding back the truth from any man. To the puffed-up planter he would say, ‘Be just, be humble, care for and love those that are below you. Remember they are God’s children; and look to it that you receive not your good things in this life, and go a-begging in the life to come.’ To the poor slave he would say, ‘God hath made of one blood all that dwell on the face of the earth. So, be not cast down; but be patient and dutiful; for your reward will be great in heaven. There all things are made even. If you suffer here, so much more will you enjoy hereafter.’ And to the working white man he would say, ‘Teach your children, read your Bible, leave off gaming and drinking. Be men; for on you rests the future of a great nation; and there can be no true greatness that is not founded on goodness.’

“And so he labored for fifty years. His work paid as he went along; but now the great reward is with him; for we know that they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.

"I stayed with him till after dark, and, when I went away, he put his hand on my head, and said, 'Boy, be a man. Spend your spare money in good books. Study them and nature; and in everything look for God; and remember that the noble life is the one which, in little words and little ways, preaches daily by the roadside.'

"That was nearly forty years ago, and the old man has been long dead; but his words are living in me yet, and I know that I shall be welcomed by him when I go to-morrow."

The blacksmith finished, and a long silence followed, broken only by the low sighing of the wind, and the sharp crackling of the pine-knots, which now cast only a dim light over the desolate room. For a time the men sat around, gazing vacantly at the fire, or looking moodily out into the dark woods, oppressed with feelings of pity for the good man they were leading to an undeserved death; or with thoughts of the murdered boy, whose spirit, many of them feared, was even then moving among them. Then, one by one, they rose, and, stretching themselves on the ground or on the rough benches, sank into uneasy slumbers.

The low platform extended across the farther end of the room, and, resting on the blankets which were

spread upon it, James and the Captain had listened to the whole of this conversation. When it was ended, the trooper said to the blacksmith, "Come here, Mr. Holley. You can turn in alongside of us. There is a blanket."

The blacksmith lay down, and soon the heavy breathing of the men was the only sound to be heard in the gloomy building.

CHAPTER XIII.

A "SPIRITUAL" MANIFESTATION.

BUT the boy did not sleep. His mind busy with many thoughts, he lay watching the trembling shadows of the low fire that still flickered on the hearth, or the straggling light of the newly-risen moon, which crept in through the crevices of the old building. Outside a solitary sentry was riding his lonely round, singing as he went, and the owls and night-hawks were croaking a hoarse song in the still woods, waking the dull echoes with their doleful music ; but no other sounds were stirring.

At last the moonlight faded out of the boy's eyes, the sounds died out of his ears, and suddenly he seemed to be in a little room far away at the northward. It was a pleasant room, with a neat carpet on the floor, a bright fire on the hearth, a vase of flowers on the mantle-piece, and an old clock ticking away in the chimney-corner. Only one person was in it, — a little woman, not old, nor yet young ; and she was seated by a small table, busily at work, knitting. She did not hear the boy, for he entered

with a step as noiseless as the tread of time, when it falls on the hearts of the young and the loving. It was his mother, and he would surprise her, for she thought him far away, in a Southern prison. He took a step or two forward, then suddenly paused ; for he saw that other people were in the room talking with the little woman. It was strange he had not seen them before, and stranger still the costume they were wearing. "What a singular climate this has got to be," he thought to himself, "roaring fires and muslin gowns, all in one season."

There were two of the strangers, clad in white robes, spotless as the untrodden snow on the mountains. The boy went more closely, and then, all at once, their faces grew familiar. But, could it be? Was that comely man his father? His father, whom they laid away in the ground years before, and all the while had thought at rest in heaven? And the other? was she his little sister, he thought sleeping in the winter's snow, grown into a radiant woman? The boy looked again, and then, with a wild cry, sprang forward. The two took him in their arms, placed their hands upon his head, and bent over him as if in blessing. A moment so they stood ; then the darkness gathered round, and the boy woke again in the old building.

As he opened his eyes in the gloomy room, he heard a sound like the crackling of a branch outside, near the window under which the blacksmith was sleeping. It was that which had awakened him; and he turned over to woo again the beautiful vision. But in a moment the sound came again, and then he heard a low guarded whisper. "Hist! hist!" it said. "Boss! Mr. Holley! Wake up, but be dreadful quiet."

The boy saw the blacksmith raise himself on his elbow, and turn his ear to the open window. "Is it you, Jake?" he said, so low that only the night and the boy could hear him.

"Yes," answered the whisper. "Yere's a knife. Cut yer cords; but lay low, and wait till we'se a ready."

Something bright then glittered between the logs, and went into the hand of the blacksmith.

"Thar's a nag hitched ter the second tree," continued the voice, "but we must skeer the troop away, fur some on 'em mought spy ye. Lay low, till I tell ye we'se a ready."

"Yes, yes! God bless you, Jake," and the blacksmith stretched himself out on the platform, and again breathed heavily.

Steps then seemed to move away; and soon the

boy heard sounds in the far corner where the Rebel lad was buried. Hidden by the darkness which shrouded that end of the building, he raised his head to listen, and then the cold horror again crept over him, for, standing in the open doorway, the moonlight falling full on his face, was the slave boy Robert. The truth flashed upon him. Jake, and perhaps the poor white man, had come to liberate the blacksmith; but he—he was there on a deadlier errand.

What should the boy do? If he gave the alarm the blacksmith would not escape, and Robert and the rest might be taken; but if he kept silent, the sleeping and disabled trooper would surely be murdered. It was a fearful dilemma, and the boy asked God to guide him. He lay between the blacksmith and the Captain, and, in a moment reaching out his hand, he touched the latter gently on the shoulder. He was awake, and he whispered: "I know. I've heard it all. Keep quiet."

"But," said the boy, "there is danger. Robert—is—" He said no more, for a heavy hand was at his throat, choking back his words half-spoken.

"Take off your hand, Mr. Holley," whispered the Captain, raising himself on his elbow. "Neither the boy nor I will harm you."

The blacksmith released his hold, and sank down

again, and the trooper looked around the silent and dimly lighted apartment. In a moment his eye rested on the figure in the doorway. Giving a sudden start he shrunk back a little, and then the boy said, in a low tone, "It was he who shot at you. He is here to kill you."

The trooper bent down his head, and was silent for a moment; then he whispered to the boy, "Make no noise. I am in God's hands. My life is n't worth four, — those three and Mr. Holley's."

The figure disappeared from the doorway, and soon low moans came from the grave in the far corner of the building. They seemed to issue from the ground, and at first were low and broken as the sobs of a sleeping child; but soon grew louder, until they burst into wild wails, like the long howls of hungry wolves at midnight. In an instant every trooper was on his feet, and every eye was bent on the grave in the corner.

The Sergeant was the first to speak. "My God!" he cried, "it 'r' the boy's voice, jest as I yered him screech out fur his mother the minnit they hung him."

The words were scarcely spoken, when a bright light blazed up from the hearth near the grave, and, flashing across the room, went out in the darkness.

In a moment it blazed up again, and again went out with a rumbling sound like the noise of distant thunder. Meanwhile, the cries grew even more wildly terrible, and the men huddled together about the doorway, stupid with horror and amazement. In another moment a still brighter light blazed forth, and this was followed by an explosion which shook the chimney to its foundations, and tumbled down the rotten logs, and the larger part of the roof of that end of the building.

The terror-stricken troopers fled to the woods, and then a man rushed in at the opening. "Quick, Boss," he cried, "thar hain't a minnit ter lose; they'll be over the skeer, and arter us in a jiffin."

James rose to his feet when the roof fell in; and now, through the thick smoke and floating cinders which filled the room, saw a dark figure creeping along over the ruins towards the Captain. It seemed to hold something in its hand which glittered like a knife in the muffled moonlight. The boy gave a wild cry, but the figure was already on the platform, and with the words, "I have you now," the knife was descending into the body of the prostrate trooper. Only an instant of time was between him and eternity; but in that instant the guide clutched the knife-hilt, crying out, "Ye infernal villun! This ar' why ye come so willin'."

They struggled for a moment; but then the knife fell from the slave boy's hand, and the guide tossed him, as if he had been a man of cork, through the open window. "Away!" he cried, "tuck yerself off, or I'll send yer black soul whar it belongs, as sure as I'm a Christian."

In a moment more the blacksmith and the guide followed; and soon the boy heard the rapid tramp of horses going down the road by which the troop had come in the morning. Then turning round he looked at the Captain. He was raised on his elbow, but his head was bowed down, and he seemed to be praying.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE MOUNTAIN BY MOONLIGHT.

FOR a short while nothing broke the silence. The boy then heard a voice outside saying, "I say, Sargint, I know'd them spirits wus bogus. Thar they goes on solid hoss-flesh."

"Sanders orter know," said another voice, "he's been among the devils. But blast my eyes ef one on 'em hain't the blacksmith!"

"So it ar'," shouted the Sergeant, "as sure as I'm a white man! Mount, men! mount! Two or three on ye stay with the Cap'n, the rest follow me. Quick! or the Cunnel 'll make this kentry too hot ter hold any on us."

There was a confused hurrying to and fro; but the horses were unsaddled, and the carbines under the rubbish of the ruined building; and fully fifteen minutes elapsed before the men were mounted, and following the fugitives.

By that time the guide and the blacksmith had gone three miles, and reached a narrow bridle-path which led directly over the mountain. Turning into

it, the guide shouted to his companion: "It goes stret ter the Cunnel's camp; but it 'r' the safest road we kin travil, — they wont think ter foller."

Another three miles they rode rapidly forward, then halted on a rising ground which overlooked the highway. The woods were still, and the full moon, now two hours high, shining through the clear air, lit up the night with a glow like that you have seen in the sky when the clouds have first told of the coming sunrise.

Putting his hand to his ear, the guide listened. "Don't ye yere 'em, Boss?" he said. "They hain't yit got ter the turnin'."

"No," answered the blacksmith; "but by this moon they 'll see our tracks as plain as by daylight. Had n't we better push on, and trust to the horses?"

"I reckon not. Yer nag hain't no bottom. It 'r' the beast the ma'am rode, and thar ar' ten in the troop as, on a long stretch, hev run him all ter flinders, — 'sides, they 're comin' nigher, and mought yere our trampin'. They carn't track us on this grass; and ef they turns up, we 'll jest lay low till they goes by, and over the mounting."

The tramp of the horsemen came nearer, until it sounded not a mile away; then the guide spoke again: "It 'r' as I counted," he said, "they're gone

on ter the smithy. They reckon old foxes hain't more 'n one hole. Now, Boss, we mought go on; but we 'd best walk the nags, 'case 't won't make no noise, and 'll guv 'em a chance ter breathe ag'in the next chase."

They rode slowly forward, and the blacksmith said, "Did n't you say this path led directly to Mosby's camp?"

"It do; but thar's another as branches off 'bout a mile above yere, and goes along the side of the mounting. My idee ar' ter tuck thet, and lay out in the woods till ter-morrer night, — then six mile will tuck us inter the road beyont the old church; and, when we gits thar, p'raps we kin see our way out o' Virginny. It 'r ticklish business, fur this mounting ar' alive with our men; but I reckon we kin keep our nags out o' hearin', ef we kin git 'em fur 'nuff frum the bridle-way."

"Have you seen Ruth?" asked the blacksmith.

"Yes. I left her ahind ter John's house. She's a gwine ter set out fur Winchester in the mornin', and she counts on meetin' ye thar. She know'd what we went about; and I reckon she holped it along with her prayin'."

"But how did you happen to go back to Bursley's?"

“Wall, ye sees, that ar’ black devil said he ’d watch the road, — though I did n’t think thar was any danger uv the Sargint follerin’. Thinkin’ so, I went back thet way when I left the cabin, — meanin’ ter tuck the path through the woods, ’fore ye come ter the smithy, and so git inter the road ahead o’ the troop. Thet route, ye knows, ar’ a right sight ’nigher ’n the one round by Major Lucy’s, and it ’peared tēr me, ef I did n’t git fust ter camp, the Cunnel mought suspicion me, fur he’s keener arter sich things nur a fox arter a hen-roost. So I went thet way ; but I hed n’t gone three mile — jest ter the hill whar we met the Yankee boy — ’fore I come onter the darkey hid away among the bushes. He halted me, and we stood thar a parleyin’, when, all uv a sudden, he screeched out, — he has ears keener ’n a hound’s, — ‘They ’s a comin’.’

“I listened, and shore ’nuff they wus, — and so nigh thet they ’d ha’ seed me ef I ’d turned back on the path, sartin. The feller ’peared honest, so I telled him ter ride on, and guv ye warnin’ ; and I put inter the timber with the mar’, ’bout a hundred rods back frum the bridle-way.

“I yered ’em go by, and feelin’ sort o’ oneasy ’bout ye, I led the mar’ inter the path ag’in, and follered, till I come ’in a quarter uv a mile o’ the cl’arin’. Thar

I got off the nag and clumb a tree, whar I seed all as happened.

"I seed John run from the cabin, and put fur the timber; and, when he come nigh 'nuff, I cawed loike a crow,—the old sign I l'arned o' him when he used ter help us at the smithy. He know'd it in a minnit, and come ter me, and thar we sôt, and—seed the durned devils tuck ye, not able ter lift a hand ter hinder. When ye wus gone, we come down and went ter the cabin; but afore that I 'd the whole plan in my head, cl'ar up ter our turnin' inter this yere bridle-way."

"It was an amazing smart plan, Jake," said the blacksmith. "What put it into your head?"

"Nothin'. It sort o' flashed out, as a spark 'll flash out uv hot iron when ye 's a-beatin' on it. I war a beatin' my brain, and all ter onst out come thet idee, and showed me yer way ter the Yankees, cl'ar as sun-up. The Lord wus in it, Boss. I knows ye say he 's in uverything as happens; but I reckon we hain't right sart'in o' thet till we finds it out by a livin' on it."

"No truth is a truth until we 've lived it," said the blacksmith. "But how did you come again on Robert Lucy?"

"Why, he come hisself ter the cabin. Ye sees,

when we 'd gone back, and was a-talkin' over the thing with the ma'am, the yaller boy comed in, and yerred the story. He tuck ter it right zealous, and offered ter jine us; but the old aunty she made a time. She said nothin' good 'ud come on his gwine: and tuck on in a drefful way. Howso'ver, he did n't mind her no more 'n ef he 'd been the yerth, and she a gale o' wind,—though he war a durned sight more loike a gale o' wind nur she war. The very devil 'peared ter ha' got inter him, and—ye seed it got out at the old meetin'-house."

"But what has he against that Captain?"

"I don't know. He said nothin' ter us 'bout him, —only that he used ter own his mother."

"Ah! I thought I had met the man before; and now I remember. He came to my house with the woman long ago,—before you lived with me. He had just bought her of Major Lucy. They had some words about the trade, and the Major drove him from the mansion in the edge of the evening, and they had nowhere to sleep over night. If tales are true, he's a hard customer; and yet he don't seem to be a very bad man."

"I nuver seed much on him," said the guide. "He's ginerally off on detached duty. Them as knows him says he drinks loike a fish, and, onst in

a while, gits desput reckless; but they reckon he's a heart somewhar 'bout him."

"Well; you all set out from the cabin?"

"Yes. I hed no time ter parley; so I telled the yaller boy ter come, or not, as he loiked, and put out. He come, and we follered not two miles ahind o' ye till we got ter the bridle-way 'as comes out ter old man Flanders's. We tuck thet, and struck the high-road just about mornin'; and then put on and got ter the old church hours afore ye."

"And what made you think of going to the meeting-house?"

"Thet was a part o' the plan as come ter me. I know'd ye'd hev ter pass it anyhow, 'case uv the wagon; and, when I looked at it, it stood ter reason the troop would halt thar; fur ye niver know'd one o' Mosby's men on a tramp ter camp in a woods or a house, when a church war in a hour's ridin'. When we got thar, we tethered the nags in the timbered holler, and arter thet went round the old shanty and talked over the plan ter-gether. Then Bursley backed out. When we stood face ter face with the thing, it sort o' cowed him; but I don't know as I kin blame him. He has a wife and chillen, and thet makes his life wuth more 'n a common man's."

"And it was desperate business, Jake," said the blacksmith; "but Bursley is only like the rest of his class. Their spirits are broken; all manhood has been crushed out of them by the very men you are fighting for."

"As I *war* a-fightin' fur, Boss. My fightin' days is over. Arter this, ef I should show my face in these diggin's, I reckon 't would be took, framed, and hung ter the limb uv a tree, so quick 't would make my head swim."

"Then you 'll go with me?"

"Yes, Boss. We 'll live or die tergether."

They had now entered the upper bridle-path, and in a few minutes the guide resumed his narrative.

"Well," he said, "as I *war* sayin', Bursley backed out, and went off, leavin' the nag ahind fur ye, as we 'd lotted on from the beginnin'. Then I seed what the Lord meant by the yaller boy's comin' along; fur I could n't ha' got on without him no how. Ye sees thar had ter be two, — one ter sing base, and the t' other treble, — one ter howl, and t' other ter put in the thunder."

"And you did it well," said the blacksmith, laughing. "I never heard such howling since I was created."

"Nur I. I thort myself it *war* the Devil, — and

I reckon that boy ar' nigh o' kin ter the old feller."

"Then he did it?"

"Yes, he done it. Ye sees, it war this a way. Thar, by the boy's grave, ye knows, ar' a place whar the logs has broke loose, and bulged out'ards. I know'd the shanty war thort ter be haunted, and that the Sargint, and nigh all o' the men, war mighty superstitious. So we determined ter hide thar by the grave, under the bulgin' logs, and, when all war still, begin ter howl loike sperrets, and let powder down the old chimney loike the devil. 'T was awful hard ter keep the yaller boy still; and I thort he'd a flung all the fat in the fire at the first go; but, lucky loike, he did n't, and it all wuck'd jest as slick as a new bellows."

"How did it like to miscarry?"

"Why, when they 'd brung ye inter the buildin', and war a lightin' the fire, he poked his head up afore I know'd it. I hauled him back in a second; but, in thet second, the Sargint seed him, and I thought we was goners."

"And the Sergeant took his face for that of the boy they had murdered?"

"Jest so, — as the Lord would hev it. Then he telled the story; and that woke up the men's

"Well, it worked well; but you ran an immense risk in giving me warning. Both the Captain and the Yankee boy heard you."

"Yered me! Yered me, and did n't let on! What on yerth could ha' come over 'em?"

"The Providence that is over all. He made the soil, and knows what seed to plant in it. He made that man's soul, and knew it could be touched with pity."

"Well, I reckon it war touched with Sanders's dream. He wanted ter keep out o' the fire. Ha! ha!"

"Fear is a poor motive for a good action. The Captain is too intelligent a man to believe in such things."

"Well, p'raps he ar'; but I'm durned ef the man's 'count o' the hot place did n't make me shiver. I war 'hotter'n fire, and colder'n Greenland,' by turns, and all ter onst, all over. But I reckon we 'se come 'bout fur 'nuff. Had n't we best be a luckin' up a roost 'mong the timber?"

The blacksmith assented; and the guide, dismounting and leaving his horse standing in the road, narrowly inspected the woods on both sides of the bridle-way. They had come about two miles along a path running parallel with the high-road leading to the

ruined church, and were in the midst of a forest of oaks and pines, among which stunted cedars and a thick underbrush were growing. The guide went into the woods, but in a few moments burst out of the underbrush, crying out, "Don't ye yere 'em, Boss! The devils hev tracked us up the bridle-way!"

The blacksmith listened, and heard sounds, as of a dozen horsemen coming rapidly up the mountain. "We must take to the woods," he said, quickly.

"No, no! Thet 'll nuver do, *now*. They 'd scour every inch of the timber. They know we has n't gone ter camp; and thar 's nary turn-off but this; so they 'll be sure ter tuck it. We must put ahead. Thar 's a bridge over a right deep branch, a mile beyont; we 'll cut thet away, and then make as many mile as we kin afore daylight."

They dashed rapidly forward. A fallen tree was in the way, but they cleared it at a bound, and were at the bridge twenty minutes in advance of their pursuers. It was only a foot-way,—a few rough planks nailed loosely to two cross-timbers, spanning a ravine about twenty feet wide and forty deep. Its sides were perpendicular rocks, and in its bed a shallow stream—in winter a foaming torrent—was flowing.

If those planks could be removed, the fugitives

would gain a long hour on the rangers ; for the latter would have to circle back to the old church, and take a new start, and the distance round was ten miles by the fleetest horse in Virginia. They sprang to the ground, and bent all their strength to the work. The blacksmith was a Hercules ; but he had but one arm, and his only tool was the guide's carbine. Fully five minutes elapsed before the first plank was loosened from its fastenings ; but the next came up more quickly, for the beam of the bridge served as a fulcrum. The stock of the carbine then gave way ; but the barrel was left, and the blacksmith's hand was in ; and soon the planks went down the ravine, as snow-flakes go down a winter whirlwind. In fifteen minutes the flooring was cleared away, and the blacksmith crawled back along one of the cross-timbers. A minute or two was consumed in catching his horse, which was not so docile as the guide's, and then they mounted ; but then the rangers were upon them, and a bullet, whistling over their heads, lodged among the timber. They put spurs to their nags ; but in a moment another bullet cut the air, and the guide's mare leaped madly forward, staggered a step or two, and then fell across the bridle-way. The guide went down with her.

"Quick, Jake ! On to my horse !" cried the blacksmith.

The guide tried to rise but could not. "My leg ar' broke," he said. "Go, Boss, they 'll fire ag'in, the nag 'll save me from the bullets."

He lay under the lee of the animal. The rangers were at the edge of the ravine, not a hundred yards away, but the Sergeant had ordered them to "stop firin'."

The blacksmith dismounted, and leading his horse to the guide attempted to lift him from the ground; but the guide said, "No, Boss. Yer nag would n't tote us two, five mile, no how. Go, I beg o' ye, go."

"I can't leave you, Jake," answered the blacksmith.

But some of the rangers had dismounted, and were then creeping across on the beams of the bridge.

"Don't ye see?" said the guide. "Think uv the ma'am! Go."

The blacksmith hesitated no longer, but bounded upon the back of his horse, saying, "Good by! God bless ye, Jake!"

"God bless ye, Boss! I promised the ma'am ter git ye loose, or die in tryin', and I'se done it. Ha! ha!"

These words went down the wind as the blacksmith galloped away along the bridle-path.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RIDE OF THE BLACKSMITH.

IT was not the thought of his wife, though she was dear to him, nor of his own life, though he valued it as a gift of God, not to be thrown uselessly away, but the thought of his friend, who had risked his life for him, which made the blacksmith spring upon his horse, bury the rowels in its flanks, and sweep like the wind up the bridle-way. He saw the rangers moving across the timbers, and knew that in a moment they would be upon them. He knew that if, in that single moment, he could extricate the guide from his fallen horse, he could not mount him upon the back of his own animal. Another moment and both would be prisoners, and so, powerless to aid each other. But if he went away, he might aid the guide. He might ride to the Union lines and bring a force to his rescue before the merciless rough-rider should have time to hang him. He might do this, but it was only a bare possibility; for daylight and thirty miles of country infested with Rebel rangers lay between him and the camp of

the Union General. But it is on these possibilities, these forlorn hopes, which appall the hearts of cowards, but inspire the souls of the truly brave, that often hang the fate of men, and armies, and even nations. The blacksmith was a brave man, brave with that bravery which comes only from perfect reliance on God ; so he turned away from his friend, buried the rowels in his horse's flanks, and bounded up the bridle-way.

His route was beset with perils. At Front Royal—ten miles beyond—was a squad of Rebel cavalry, with pickets posted on both sides of the village. He could not hope to pass them by daylight, and it then wanted only two hours of sunrise. His horse was already much blown ; for, as the guide had said, the beast had no bottom,—none of that endurance which carries horses, and men too, through long journeys and great undertakings. The animal might give out ; and if he bore him safely through Front Royal, the route beyond was over an open road, in open day, where every house might hold an enemy, and every clump of bushes hide an ambuscade of Rebel horsemen. If he made a detour to avoid the town, he would encounter dangers as great, and lose five of the few hours in which he could make the rescue ; so again he thrust his spurs

into his horse's flanks, and rode swiftly up the mountain.

He halted at the junction with the high-road, and looked back down the mountain. A bright fire was blazing, far below, in the old meeting-house, and torches were moving to and fro in the woods between it and the broken bridge; but all else was moonlight and silence. He lingered but a moment, and again went forward. Soon he reached Chester Gap at the summit of the Ridge; then his way was down hill, his horse went freer, and, half an hour before sunrise, he rode up to the mounted sentry at the entrance of Front Royal.

The man was in the shadow of the trees, and the blacksmith did not see him till the word "Halt!" exploded in his ears with a report like that of a shotgun. Reining his tired beast into a walk, he said, "I'm on urgent business. Lead me at once to Captain Burrows."

"Halt, I tell ye!" yelled the sentry, not heeding the remark, "ye carn't pass without the countersign."

The few forward paces he had taken had brought the blacksmith within reach of the soldier. He was without weapons, but his single arm, nerved by hard work, and a strong purpose, could overcome half a

dozen such striplings ; so he halted. "I don't know the word," he said. "Three nights ago it was Confederacy."

"Ef ye 'd lost yer front teeth, thet moight be it now ; but 't ain't, so ye carn't pass, stranger," said the sentry, moving his horse a little up the road.

"I know! Now it comès to me!" exclaimed the blacksmith, following the other into the shadow, "Confederates!"

"Ye 've hit it ; but I reckon 't war a Yankee guess. War n't it?"

"Do I look like a Yankee?" asked the blacksmith, laughing.

The Rebel opened his dark lantern, and, holding it up to the face of the loyalist, took a close survey of his features. "No," he said, "but I 'm durned ef yer a Suth'ner. No Suth'ner 'buses horse-flesh loike yer doin'. The nag 's dyin'."

"Never mind the nag. I tell you I 'm in a hurry. Can I pass?"

"Yes. Ye 've guessed the word ; but I 've a feelin' fur dumb critters ; so ye kin pass. Ye 'll find the Cap'n at the public house. Don't tell him how ye got by."

"No, I won't. Good morning."

"Good mornin', stranger." And the blacksmith's

jaded nag trotted briskly in among the silent houses, and, turning off to avoid the soldiers stationed about the tavern, took a narrow by-way winding along the outskirts of the village.

This way was not guarded, as only one route — the plank road which crosses the Shenandoah a mile beyond, and goes on to Winchester — gives exit from the town at the westward. Into this road the guide turned when once beyond the buildings, and rode slowly on, thinking over his situation.

One great danger was surmounted; for the password was a key which would unlock all the gates of Front Royal; but Winchester was twenty miles beyond, and his horse was breaking down, and might at any moment fall in the highway. Where could he get another? He knew a dozen Union men living near his intended route; but would the Rebels have left one of them an ounce of horse-flesh? He might walk twenty miles, but it would consume time, and time — which the careless waste, drones dream away, and even earnest men do not rightly value — was then only a narrow span between the guide and eternity. With this thought he again pressed his jaded horse forward.

“Halt!” in a few moments cried a sentry.

The blacksmith slackened his pace, and answered, “Confederates.”

"All right," said the sentry. "Yer nag ar' pretty well done up, stranger."

A thought struck the blacksmith, and he came to a full halt. "Yes, he is," he replied; "but if fresh, he'd be worth two of yours. I've a long journey before me; how will you trade?"

"Wall, I don't know. How 'll ye?"

"For a hundred dollars, — saddle and all."

"I don't own the saddle," said the soldier, dismounting and narrowly examining the strange animal.

"I'm 'feared ye's broke his wind. He's bad blown."

"Well, talk quick. How 'll you trade?"

"Even!"

"Done!" and the blacksmith sprang to the ground and began to undo the girth of his saddle. The soldier did the same to his, but much more deliberately. "Great news thet, last night," he said, with his head half-way under the animal.

"What news?"

"Why, hain't ye yered! Early's got agin inter Martinsburg, and druv Av'rill clar back ter Harper's Ferry."

"The Devil!"

The blacksmith was a good man, and hated the Evil One; but even good men too frequently call

on that personage at trying moments. This was a trying moment to the blacksmith; it tried even his trust in God. The news gave a death-blow to his plan of rescuing the guide. Harper's Ferry was fifty miles away, and all his hopes had hung on Averill. Recovering himself, however, he said coolly; "I thought the Yankees were at Winchester."

"Winchester! why, whar's ye been fur days goin'. Ye sees, Av'rill follered us down ter the mountain this side o' thar a Saturday; but Early hed been reinforced, and he stood and fit him all thet day and the next; and then the Yanks ske-daddled and did n't holt up till they got clar ter the Ferry. Early follered, and got inter Martinsburg on Tuesday."

Tuesday was the 26th of July, and this was the morning of Thursday, the 28th.

"Then the Yankees are cleared entirely from the Valley?" said the blacksmith, speaking with apparent unconcern, but with a keen agony at his heart which almost stopped its beating.

"Av'rill has drawed his men in from Bunker Hill, and round Martinsburg; and I reckon they's pretty well cl'ared out o' the whole destrict; though a feller was along yere not a hour back, as said he'd jest seed a hundred on 'em breakin' cover t'other

side o' Millwood. I sent him on ter the Cap'n; but it carn't be. It must ha' been Mosby, rigged out loike the Yankees."

A gleam of hope broke upon the blacksmith. It was not Mosby. It was some scouting party of Union cavalry. If he could reach them, he might yet save the guide; for the Rebel ranger had not a hundred men with him on the mountain. With this thought he sprang upon his fresh animal, saying, "You 've a very small force here to guard so large a quantity of stores."

"Thet ar' so, stranger. We orter hev a regiment instead uv a sorry company."

This was all the information the blacksmith wanted, and he said "Good morning" to the sentry.

The sun had now risen, gilding the leafy woods, and silvering the windings of the beautiful river with all the hues of morning. Some of its beams stole down into the heart of the blacksmith. He forgot the perilous way, the enemy hidden in every house, the Rebel band lurking at every cross-road, and thought only of the hundred men he would soon be leading to the Rebel lair on the mountain. He rode rapidly forward, and a short half-hour brought him in sight of the bridge over the Shenandoah. But what was that he then saw glancing among the

trees? A tent; and near it, half a dozen horses ready-saddled. Instinctively he drew up his animal; but he was already discovered, and two mounted men moved out into the highway. It was a vedette station; but what should he fear? He had the key that would open the pathway.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he said, as he came nearly abreast of the horsemen.

"Good morning," they answered. "The counter-sign."

"Confederates," he responded, carelessly turning his eyes towards the tent in the timber. At the entrance of the tent was a thing that anywhere out of the South would be a natural curiosity. It was an immense slouched hat, a suit of greasy "butter-nuts," and a scarecrow of a man, with long locks, sunken eyes, and a skin of untanned leather. He knew the blacksmith well, and had once before waylaid and betrayed him. One glance was enough for the blacksmith. He heard the words "All right," as he put spurs to his horse and bounded away over the river.

"'Tain't all right," shrieked the scarecrow, rushing into the highway. "It 'r old Holley. Shoot him down; his life 'll make any on ye a Cap'n!"

He was half-way across the bridge; but bullets

began to sing, and horses' heels to chime in, making a terrible chorus. He could not hope to outrun them. His other horse was all speed, — this one was all bottom. A quick thought struck him. The bridge was twenty feet high; but the river was deep and, broad, and he would trust the blue water. Reining up his horse, he leaped upon the railing, and pressing his one arm to his side, sank down among the fishes. The Rebels did not follow, — not being of the family of Jonah. They would gather in the middle of the bridge, and fire on him again when he came to the surface of the water. This was plain to the blacksmith; so, he floated down a few yards, and came up directly under them, against one of the abutments. All was silent for a few minutes, then he heard one say, "What'r become on the old critter? Don't he hev ter breathe loike we folks?"

"I reckon he won't draw breath again," said another. "It's ordinary to come up three times; but he's gone straight to the bottom."

Then the blacksmith heard more footsteps, and soon concluded that all the soldiers on the station had gathered on the bridge directly above him. Occasionally a word would be said; but most of them seemed to be intently watching the water.

Some fifteen minutes passed in this way, and then he heard the rapid tread of a horse approaching on the western side of the river. One of the soldiers galloped to meet the horseman, and soon the usual words, "Halt! The countersign!" came over the water. In a few minutes more the two horsemen rode towards the knot of soldiers on the bridge, and one of them said, "Sergeant, this man says a hundred Yankee cavalry are hid in the woods just north of Happy Creek. He reckons they mean to attack us as soon as dark, and burn the stores at Front Royal."

"Pshaw! It 'r' Mosby's gang," answered the Sergeant.

"I reckon not. He says they came there not an hour ago,—travelling all the way by night. He followed them from about six miles east of Millwood; and they seemed to want to keep mighty shady. Mosby would n't do that round here; and I saw him only the day before yesterday at Flint Hill, and he said he was about to call in his men for a raid on the Yanks, at the eastward."

"But whar ar' our folks, thet they 'low a handful of Yanks ter creep in so fur, in the r'ar uv the army?" asked the Sergeant.

"Thar hain't ten gray-backs this side of Martins-

burg," said another voice, apparently that of the bearer of the tidings. "Ye see, Early roped everything in, 'fore he fit Av'rill at Winchester."

"Well, let 'em come on," said the Sergeant, "they 'll hev ter come over this yere bridge, and our thirty men kin hold it ag'in thirty hundred."

"But the Captain ought to know this," responded the first speaker.

"Yes ; s'pose ye tuck the man on, and tell him," said the Sergeant ; "and boys, every one on ye ter t'other side. Mount and be ready. The man Holley's gone to the fishes. The old Shenandoah ar' a loyal stream,—it 'r' been the end uv one traitor, sartin."

When they were gone, the blacksmith floated silently down the river, and, landing half a mile below, made his way, hatless and dripping with wet, to the Union camp in the woods at the north of Happy Creek.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BLACKSMITH AMONG THE YANKEES.

IT is easy to account for the sudden appearance of this body of Union troops in the very heart of the Rebel country. Robert, the slave boy, when so unceremoniously ejected by the guide from the ruined building, rushed at once to the spot in the woods where the horses of the rangers were tethered. It was only the work of a moment to unfasten one of the animals, bound upon its back, and, amid the panic and confusion, escape to the highway.

Robert's first thought was of personal safety; then the purpose of his life came back to him with all its grim resolution. In an instant his plan was formed. He would make his way to the Union lines, and bring back a force to capture Mosby. He was a prize the Yankees would value; and they might have him and welcome, if by their aid he could wreak his vengeance on the Captain. The guide had said there were not fifty men at the Ranger's camp, and he knew its location. Mosby, it was true,

stayed not long in a place, and could, in half a day, draw in two hundred men from the country around ; but he could bring a larger force, track the Rebel wherever he went, and, in sixty hours, be upon him. He did not know where the nearest Union troops were stationed ; but there must be a large body at Harper's Ferry. The Ferry was more than fifty miles away ; but, luckily, he had taken one of the fleetest animals in the troop, and could be there by morning, — if he killed the horse with the journey. He was without a saddle ; but, to one bred among horses, bare-back is the easier way of riding. But speed, not ease, was the thought of the slave boy.

Bearing away along the eastern slope of the Ridge, with the intention of crossing it at Snicker's Gap, he reached, in two hours, the little town of Upper-ville, and, riding into its silent street, came upon a man whose face was somewhat darker than the moonlight. "Uncle," he said to him, "do you know where the nearest Union troops are stationed?"

"Dunno, massa, dunno. None on 'em stays roun' yere ; but a whole lot o' 'em am jess gwine up de road ter Ashby's."

"How many, and how long ago?"

"A heap. Nigh onter free hundred, I reckon."

"How long ago?"

"Long 'go? Wall, leff me see, massa ; dis darkey hed ter woke up, pull on him clo'es, and den peg out ter de ole 'ooman's. Dat tuck some time, sartin ; and dey 'm gone by 'bout so much longer."

"Is. there more than one road?"

"Only one, massa. It go stret fru de Gap. Fol-ler it right smart, and you 'll cotch 'em in no time."

Without another word, the slave boy turned square-ly to the left, and took the road which led up the Ridge. Urging his horse to its utmost speed, he was soon at the summit of the Gap, and was press-ing on at a break-neck pace, when a loud summons brought his animal—trained to obey quickly the word of command—to a sudden halt.

Before the word was half spoken, a dozen mounted men sprang from the trees and into the road, com-pletely blocking the passage. A glance at their uni-forms satisfied the slave boy that he was among the three hundred. One of them rode up and said to him : "Who are you, and where are you going in so much of a hurry?"

"I 'm seeking you. Be good enough to take me to your Colonel," was the quick answer.

"Who are you, and what do you want with our Colonel?"

"I'm an escaped slave. I can take you to Mosby's camp before sunrise."

"The Devil you can!" and the man came nearer, and closely scanned Robert's features. "You're light for a slave, but the chivalry can turn black into white. Where is Mosby?"

"At Flint Hill, twenty-five miles to the south. Day before yesterday he had n't fifty men with him, — he'll have only twenty more to-morrow morning."

"Well, come this way, our Colonel is a Major. One of you boys follow, and keep an eye on the fellow." With these words the trooper led the way into the wood, and up a sloping ground, to a narrow plateau which commanded both entrances to the Gap, and afforded a wide view of the surrounding country.

About a hundred horses were picketed among the trees on this plateau, and as many men were stretched on the ground sleeping. They were a party of cavalry which had left Leesburg at sunset, on a reconnoissance as far westward as Millwood, — a small town in the Shenandoah Valley about ten miles south of Winchester. Their orders were to pass down to Snicker's Gap, then on through Ashby's Gap, into the Valley; returning by whatever route they found most feasible. They were to gather accurate information of the strength and disposition

of Early's army; and their presence clearly indicated that Averill contemplated dropping down from Harper's Ferry, crossing the Blue Ridge at Snicker's or Ashby's Gap, and getting into Early's rear, to cut him off from supplies and reinforcements, and obtain a decisive victory. It was, therefore, a most important reconnoissance. It was intrusted to a Yankee Major, plucky, ambitious, and recklessly in love with adventure; but who knew no more about the country than most star-gazers know about the moon. The troop had ridden twenty-five miles, and halted for a few hours' rest, intending to resume the march before morning.

The officer lay under a stunted pine, with a blanket under his head, apparently studying the heavenly bodies, when Robert and the two soldiers approached him. "Major," said the picket officer, "here is a fellow that offers to guide us to Mosby."

The Major sprang to his feet, saying, "Who is he? Where is Mosby?"

"I'm a slave, sir," replied Robert. "I have been forced to fight against you, and want to square accounts by doing you a great service."

"That would indeed be a great service. Bring a lantern, — let me have a look at the man," said the officer in a quick, nervous manner. His imagina-

tion took fire at the mere mention of Mosby. He would gain greater distinction by his capture, than Averill would by winning a great battle, and it might place a star on his shoulder ; so, in his mind, the reconnoissance became at once of secondary importance.

The lantern was brought and hung to a branch of the tree, and then the officer said, closely scanning the features of the slave boy, "Sit down, my friend. I like to look at people I talk with."

Robert sat down, as much at his ease as if they were equals ; and they were in all but rank and sound judgment. The rank was on the side of the man ; the judgment on the side of the boy ; and the matter of principle was pretty evenly divided between them. Neither had any of it, or any object in life beyond the securing of their personal ends.

And the object in life, let me say to the young reader, is what makes the radical difference between bad men and good, devils and angels. Both Lucifer and Gabriel, if accounts are true, are what we call gentlemen, — with polished manners, cultivated minds, and great natural abilities ; but one seeks only his own ends, the other the good of others. The heart of one centres in himself, the heart of

the other embraces the universe. But this little homily has led me away from my story. The lantern which gave the man a glance at the boy's exterior gave the boy a full view of the man's interior. With the keen penetration of his race, he read him as he would have read an open book, and at once detected the hidden springs of his nature. Adroitly shaping his communications to serve his purposes, he made what was in truth a most hazardous enterprise seem a mere holiday adventure, and in half an hour had the real command of the troop of cavalry.

The Major called a council of his officers and laid the project before them, but it met with no approval. One of them, a weather-beaten veteran who had risen from the ranks, gave it decided opposition. "You must obey orders," he said bluntly, "go on to Millwood, or lose your commission. If you go down there on the west of the Ridge, and attempt to cross below, you may get caught in a trap from which there 'll be no escape. We know there's a considerable force in Manassas Gap; there may be one at Front Royal strong enough to stop us at the bridge over the Shenandoah. If there is, we'll have to fall back, and return over the Ridge at this or Snicker's Gap. At Snicker's

we know there's a body of Rebels, and thirty determined men could hold this gap against twice our number. The country people will give news of our passing, and bushwhackers enough to defend this road will collect here in a day; and then we shall be forced north, right into the jaws of Early. In my judgment, the only way to approach Flint Hill is from the east of the Ridge. If we had time and it would not interfere with the reconnoissance, we might make a detour to avoid the Rebels at Manassas Gap, and be down upon Mosby by noon tomorrow; but we have n't time, and it would interfere with the reconnoissance."

"But," answered the Major, "you forget that the bridge at Front Royal is not guarded; and that the very boldness of the enterprise will insure its success. It would ring through the country like Mosby's capture of Stoughton."

"If it succeeded! Mosby sent his spies ahead, and took Stoughton under cover of a dark, rainy night, knowing every inch of the way. We have no reliable information, and shall have to pass Front Royal, and travel twenty miles by daylight, through a country where we shall be surrounded by Rebel troops, and every other white man will run his legs off to give them information."

"But we *have* information," replied the Major. "This young man is right from there, and says no force is at Front Royal."

"Front Royal is a depot of supplies. It is n't likely the Rebels would leave it unguarded."

"Are you sure there are no troops at Front Royal?" then asked the Major of the slave boy.

"There were none the day before yesterday, — so one of Mosby's men told me not six hours ago. He thought none were there yesterday," answered Robert, with the look and tone of simple honesty. This was the second falsehood he had told on the subject; but one untruth always costs another. And yet he did not mean to entrap the cavalry. He knew he was luring them into great danger, but his own ends could not be served without he led them safely to Mosby. He was confident that the bridges over the Shenandoah were guarded, but they could, he thought, force a passage; if not at Front Royal, then below at Thornton's Gap, a little to the southwest of Flint Hill.

"We go! Captain Mansfield," said the Major, with a wave of the hand, which might have become one of the chivalry. "Order the men to horse."

In ten minutes they were on the way, and just after daylight halted in a thick wood near Happy

Creek, to breakfast the men and horses, and reconnoitre the road before attempting the passage of the Shenandoah. Two of the men, arrayed for the occasion in the homespun of the district, had gone off on the reconnoissance, and the rest were scattered about among the trees boiling their morning coffee, when Captain Mansfield approached the Major with the blacksmith.

"Here is a gentleman, Major," he said, "who can give you very valuable information."

The blacksmith, just emerged from his bath in the river, had walked in his dripping clothes three miles through the swamps and underbrush, and did not make a very presentable appearance, yet the Captain introduced him as a gentleman. The same instinct which had led him to distrust the slave boy impressed him with this man's true character.

"It is Mr. Holley!" exclaimed Robert, springing to his feet, and speaking to the Major, "the man we rescued at the old meeting-house."

"Indeed," said the Major, "I am glad to see you, Mr. Holley; glad to see you are out of the grip of the Rebels."

"I thank you, sir. How do you happen to be here, Robert?" answered the blacksmith, with a look of surprise at the slave boy.

"I am leading the troop to the capture of Mosby. Have you come by Front Royal?"

"Yes, and across the river by swimming," answered the blacksmith, smiling.

"Are there Rebels there?" asked the Major.

"Yes, enough to hold the bridge against you; and they know you are coming."

"And how is it at Thornton's Gap?" asked Robert.

"Mosby has a squad always there," answered the blacksmith.

"Then we are entrapped!" said the Captain, with a firm pressure of his lips, and an angry glance at Robert. "I suspected this fellow from the start, Major. I never knew one of his mongrel breed that was not as false and treacherous as the Devil."

The slave boy's face grew ashy pale, his eyes gave out a lurid glow, and a fierce word came to his lips; but he choked it back unspoken. It cost him an effort,—such an effort as it takes to dam a mountain-stream in mid-winter,—but he did it. Powerful natures have powerful wills, and an outbreak might have defeated a purpose dearer to him than revenge for a passing insult.

The blacksmith was the first to speak. "I know the boy," he said, looking straight at Robert. "He

has his own ends to serve; but has not meant to betray you. If he did, he would miss his object."

"But he has led us into danger, you think?" asked the Major, who seemed to be awaking to the peril into which he had been drawn, not more by Robert than by his own folly and ambition.

"Yes, sir," answered the blacksmith, "into great danger. You are surrounded by Rebels. You can't go twenty miles, I think, in any direction without coming upon them. You can't cross the Shenandoah by any of the bridges. Your only way out is by swimming the river, and getting over the Ridge by some of the bridle-paths used by the country people. But to do that you must move quick and secretly; for if your route is known, you 'll have twice your force upon you by nightfall."

"Can we swim the river? Can you guide us to one of these bridle-paths?" asked the Major with almost breathless eagerness.

"You can float the men across on a raft, and swim the horses alongside. I know some of the paths, and think I can find one that will lead you over the Ridge before dark."

"Let us set about the thing at once," said the Major. "Where shall we strike the river?"

"A few miles below it makes a bend towards

the Gap railroad. You will be seen as soon as you begin to move; for, in coming from the river, I had to run from half a dozen countrymen who were watching you. If you go down the road a few miles, they will think you are meaning to attack the force at Manassas Gap, and will post off with the news, and the Rebels will draw in every man to meet you. That will leave the coast clear, and you can slip into the woods along the river, gather dead logs enough to build a raft, and be safely on the other side in an hour."

"We will do it. You are a godsend to us, Mr. Holley," said the Major warmly.

In a few moments the two disguised countrymen returned with the tidings that a company of Rebels, with a brass six-pounder, were holding the bridge over the Shenandoah! "All right, Major," said the blacksmith, as he proceeded to exchange his wet suit for the slouched hat and dry "butternuts" of one of the counterfeit "natives." "The more frightened they are, the better, for they'll keep together, and not attempt to follow us."

The soldiers' half-eaten breakfast was thrust into their haversacks, and they set out to make the crossing. In two hours they were safely over the river, and had begun the difficult ascent of the Ridge. It

was not an open gap, with gently ascending slopes, but a steep, narrow path, covered with loose stones, and now and then obstructed with fallen trees, over which the horses stumbled, often losing their foothold and rolling down the mountain. But they toiled up the difficult way, every man afoot, leading his floundering animal, and at last reached the summit of the Ridge, foot-sore and weary. No accident befell the men, but two or three poor beasts were left behind, with broken limbs, to die slowly from want of food, or to be eaten alive by the wolves and bears which infest that region.

After a long halt they began to descend, and, about an hour before sunset, came in sight of the high-road which runs along the eastern slope of the mountain. There they paused, and waited until night-fall. They had escaped from the trap, and, no doubt, baffled all pursuit, and were within twelve miles of the camp of the rangers; but, by the advice of the blacksmith, delayed setting out to attack Mosby until then movements should be covered by the darkness. Before that came, an event occurred which I cannot explain without writing another chapter.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT MOSBY'S.

WE left the guide lying by the side of his fallen horse, and the rangers pursuing him over the broken bridge on the mountain. The Sergeant was the first to approach. "Jake," he said, "is ye much hurt?"

"Not bad, Sargint, I reckon," answered the guide, "Betz did n't pick a soft spot ter kim down on, and I could n't git my leg from under. I feels it broke jest 'bove the ankle, thet's all."

A half-dozen of the rangers had now gathered round, and among them was the man who made the nocturnal exploration of the torrid regions. "Jake," he said, "ye beats all the sperrets I uver knowed on; but 'twar a durned purty business fur a loyal man ter be at. I reckon ye'll git inter one o' them ovens as I telled on mighty sudden."

The guide made no reply, only looked at the man in an absent way, as if his thoughts were busy with other things; but the Sergeant said in an angry tone, "Sanders, shut up, nary un but a coward uver hits

a man when he 'r down; Jake ar' a decenter feller nur ye 'll uver git ter be, ef he has helped a—"

He did not pronounce the word, it seemed to stick in his throat; but the other helped out the sentence. "A durned ole traitor," he said. "Ter yere him tork, ye 'd s'pose he hed a patent right ter all thet's good in the universe. But them blatin' saints is the biggest devils. As I 'se telled ye, the ole feller hisself ar' a Methodist parson."

The Sergeant was now seriously angered, and turning on the man, said, "Shet up, and git across thet bridge ter onst, or I 'll pitch ye head fust down the presurpiss. I will!"

The man turned sulkily away, and went over to where the rest of the rangers were with the horses; and the Sergeant said to the guide, kindly, "I s'pose we'll hev ter git ye ter the camp, Jake. The ole man has shot off the stret road. Does ye know a short cut ter the meetin'-house?"

"Beyont yere a ways ar' a bridle-path as goes stret ter it. 'Tain't more 'n two mile," answered the guide.

"Wall," said the Sergeant, "one on ye go over the bridge, and fotch some o' the blankets; we'll rig out a stretcher, and tote Jake down the bridle-path, while the rest tucks the nags round the road."

The man did as he was bidden, and the blankets being stretched across two long poles, Jake was soon extricated from the fallen horse, and placed on the improvised litter. Some pine-knots being gathered to light the way through the woods, four of the party, with the Sergeant at their head, then set out to bear the wounded man down the mountain. It was the torches of this party which the blacksmith had seen when he turned and looked back while on his way to Front Royal. Their pace was slow, for the path was obstructed with fallen trees, and overhanging branches, and the sun had risen when they came in sight of the old church at the cross-roads.

The Captain lay near the road under a tree, a rude crutch resting by his side; and the other troopers sat their horses in front of the ruined building. James held the reins of the blacksmith's wagon, and all were in readiness to set out; for the rangers who had made the circuit of the high-road had already arrived with tidings of the guide's capture and condition.

As the litter approached, the Captain struggled to his feet, and limping forward, said to the Sergeant, "Put him into the wagon, and handle him carefully. His broken leg must be painful."

"But how's ye a-gwine ter git along?" asked the Sergeant.

"I can ride a horse. Half an hour's motion will make my thigh as limber as ever."

Some blankets were in the bottom of the wagon, and on them they laid the wounded man; and then the troop set out, walking their horses slowly to avoid giving the vehicle any unnecessary motion. The horsemen went before, and the wagon and the Captain followed. When the cavalcade had gone a short distance, the latter rode up alongside the vehicle, and, in a low tone, said to the guide, "You're a true, brave man. I ask your pardon for the rough words I gave you. Be prepared for the worst; but I shall get you off if it's a possible thing."

"I thanks ye, Cap'n. I went inter this with my eyes open, and I'm ready ter go it ter the eend. I never shirked nothin' yet."

"I know," said the Captain, "but be careful what you admit. They can prove nothing, except that you were found with the blacksmith."

No more was said, and they rode slowly on up the mountain.

Several hours before noon they emerged from the forest, and entered a broad clearing midway up the side of Flint Hill,—one of the more bold of the

long range of mountains which traverses the whole of Middle Virginia. Though a clearing, and in full cultivation as a plantation, the opening was dotted here and there with groves of great forest-trees; and in one of these groves was the camp of the Rebel highwayman. The camp—if that can be called a camp which is without a single tent—was a collection of curiously shaped houses, built of cypress branches and laurel twigs, and as green and rustic as the mansion in which Adam and Eve dwelt before they went out to work for a living. Among them were robbers' caves, and philosophers' grottos; Lapland huts, and Patagonian hovels; Gothic cottages, and Indian wigwams; Chinese pagodas, and—even the two-story tenements, brown as a brick (built of deciduous boughs already sere and faded) and square as a packing-box, which ornament the streets of some Northern towns. Such a grotesque group of human habitations never was seen. They appeared unfit homes for freebooters, and seemed to imply that among the lawless horde was at least one whose mind was "above his business." The man who could create forms so picturesque and beautiful as those fashioned in that rough carpentry might be "very far gone from original righteousness," but could not be "wholly given over to evil."

Entering one of the numerous paths which wound about this rustic hamlet, the troop halted abreast of the largest structure, and the Captain accosted a dismounted horseman who was standing in its doorway. Without heeding his respectful and rather cordial salutation, the horseman looked the trooper coldly in the eye, and said, curtly, "Well, have you bagged the game?"

"No. I caught him, but he got away. My men say he's in league with the Devil,—it's certain he's hard to hold."

"I'll have him," growled the other, through his barred teeth, "if it costs me my life; but I see I must send a better man than you after him."

"Go yourself then. You're the best man I know—in your own opinion," blurted out the trooper in a rage.

"Come, come, none of that, Captain. You and I must n't quarrel," said the other, holding out his hand, while a frank, pleasant smile overspread his face.

"I was hasty, Colonel. I ask your pardon," answered the Captain, with equal frankness.

This, then, was the famous guerilla, Mosby. James watched him with some interest, for the fate of the guide was in his hands. The examination was not

altogether assuring. Beneath his careless exterior, he thought there lurked a reckless, desperate spirit, which might, when aroused, do acts of great wickedness. He was of slender, but athletic frame, about the medium height, with light brown hair, a well-formed head, regular features, large gray eyes, and a dark, sun-browned complexion. He wore the gray uniform of a Confederate Colonel, with high top-boots, and a slouched hat, but as he stood there, one hand grasping the bridle-rein of his horse, — a powerful iron-gray with flowing mane and tail, — he looked anything but the black-browed ruffian he has been pictured by his enemies.

"Who have you here?" he said, resting his eye on James, and a pleasant smile playing over his features; "a new recruit?"

"Yes: a Yankee boy I picked up at Major Lucy's," said the Captain, "and one of our men wounded."

"What! Jake!" exclaimed Mosby, coming forward.

"Why, I thought you always dodged the bullets!"

The guide looked up, but said nothing. The Captain answered, "His horse fell on him, and mine did the same with me. I want the surgeon to set his leg, and look a little after mine; and then, Colonel, as I'm lame, suppose you come to my tent, if you want to talk things over."

"Well, I will; say in an hour."

The wagon then moved on to the surgeon's quarters; and while the guide's leg was being attended to, James and the Captain sat down to a frugal dinner in the rustic house appropriated to the latter.

In the midst of the meal Mosby appeared in the doorway. His face no longer wore its habitual smile, — unless you call a smile that lurid glow of the sky which sometimes precedes a thunder-storm. In a quick, excited way, he said, "What is this? Did Jake help the blacksmith to get away?"

"Yes," answered the Captain, coolly. "Sit down. I want to talk with you about it."

"Talk about it! You say he did it, — that's enough. He shall hang within an hour."

"He's a true man, Colonel. He only did what you would have done in the same circumstances."

"I trusted him, and he has betrayed me. That is enough; I don't want to know any more; he shall hang." A terrible oath followed, and he turned to leave the tent.

The Captain thrust his crutch across the opening, and said, "You can't go till you've heard what I have to say. I've a right to a hearing."

"Obligations grow troublesome when we are reminded of them," said Mosby, with a sneer.

"You don't need to be reminded of them," answered the Captain, not noticing the other's manner. "If you do, you're not the man I've taken you for."

The guerilla leader then sat down and said, impatiently, "Well, go on; but make the story short. I have much to do. We must move to-night."

The Captain requested James to go outside, to see that no one was within hearing, and to remain there until the conference was over. It lasted an hour; and then the two came to the doorway, and James heard the leader say, "Well, I'll do it, if I'm satisfied the fellow is honest. Where is he?"

"At the Surgeon's, I reckon," answered the Captain; and then, speaking to James, he added, "Here, my boy, give me your shoulder."

The boy obeyed, and the two men, the one walking, the other hobbling, went on to the quarters of the Surgeon. The guide's leg had been set, and he had been removed to the Sergeant's. At the Sergeant's a half-dozen of the rangers were collected, talking in subdued tones, — such tones as one hears in a sick-chamber, — and the guide, stretched on the ground, on a pile of blankets, was sleeping soundly.

As he entered, Mosby said, "Clear the tent, Sergeant, I want to talk with this man."

"Sartin, Cunnel," answered the Sergeant; and in a moment the boy and the two officers were left alone with the guide, who continued sleeping. Mosby touched him on the shoulder, saying, "Jake, wake up; wake up."

The guide opened his eyes, and looked at his officer. Then raising himself suddenly to his elbow, he said, hurriedly: "Why, Cunnel, ar' it ye? I ax yer pardon; but I 'se been a-stirrin' these two nights; and thet, an' the pain o' the bone-settin', has a'most tuckered me out."

Mosby looked him steadily in the face for a moment, and then said, "Jake, why did you do this?"

"I could n't help it, Cunnel. The old man brung me up. He tuck me when my mother war a-dyin'; and uver sence he's been more 'n a father ter me, and the ma'am more 'n a mother. Ef I had n't done it, Cunnel, I could n't ha' luck'd ye, nur no other honest man, in the face."

"Why did n't you tell me how you were related to him, when I sent you to guide the party?"

"'Case ef I had, ye would n't ha' sent me," answered Jake, smiling.

"And then you meant to betray me, from the start?"

"Yes, Cunnel, I did; and I was durned afeared onst that ye would n't let me go."

The other sprang to his feet, greatly enraged, and said, "You shall die. In half an hour I'll hang you."

The guide said nothing; but his features did not move, his eye did not quail, and his mouth wore the quiet smile it wore when he spoke the last words. He had evidently made up his mind for the worst.

The ranger took a step or two towards the door, but suddenly turned, and strode to the farther end of the little room, and then strode back again; all the while keeping his eye fixed on the face of the guide. A struggle seemed to be going on within him,—the struggle between passion and principle, evil and good, which every man has felt, and will feel so long as he belongs to the race of Adam. At last he stopped in his walk, and said to the guide, "You were going to the Union lines?"

"Yes, Cunnel; but not ter fight ag'in ye. I loves old Virginnny as well as ye, or ary other man."

"Then why were you going? Nobody saw you at the meeting-house."

"I did n't know thet; and I know'd ef they did, ye'd hang me ter the fust tree. I warn't anxious for thet; so I guv ye my mar's legs."

"Well, Jake ; you mean honest, and I 'll give you the chance of a trial. What you 've said, I 'll not use against you ; but I can't trust you again. You must leave the troop."

"I thanks ye, Cunnel. I allers 'sisted ye war a gentleman."

The others then left the tent ; and as they passed out, the Captain said to Mosby, "Are you sending runners out to call in the men?"

"Yes."

"Let Sanders go. He has an ill-feeling towards Jake, and his evidence might be against him."

"Very well. Let somebody give him the order."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STRANGE CAREER.

WHEN they resumed their seats at the table of the Captain, the boy said: "He is not so bad a man as I have heard he was."

"Bad!" echoed the Captain. "He has some of the best traits I ever knew in any one; and besides, he's an educated man and a gentleman."

The boy smiled as he answered, "I suppose Mr. Holley would say that might depend on your definition of a gentleman."

"Well, he might," replied the Captain, laughing; "but barring his habit of swearing, and his want of control over his passions, Mosby is a gentleman by any definition. He has good impulses, fights from pure love of the South, and came of a good family. I know, for we've been together ever since he had a separate command, and were in the same class in college. Before the war he was a lawyer; but when Virginia seceded, enlisted under Stuart as a private. He soon rose to be a first lieutenant, and, being bold and active, was employed in the scouting ser-

vice. While on this duty he would, alone, or with a small party of mounted men, hover round the Federal lines, and capture their pickets, or gather information of their movements. One dark night, with only nine men, he attacked several regiments of Union cavalry, and put them to flight, they supposing he had a whole division. At another time he went alone into the Union lines, and was coming away with all the information he wanted, when, just outside of their pickets, he captured two Yankee soldiers. He had disarmed the men, and they were riding along together, when, turning a bend in the road, they came suddenly on a party of Union cavalry. Mosby drew his overcoat about him, and cocking his pistol, said to the men, 'Speak a word, or make a sign, and I'll blow your brains out.' The men took the hint, and after riding along a while with the column, Mosby edged off, and got safely back to camp with his prisoners. He has done a thousand such things, and only once been captured."

"And how was that?" asked the boy.

"He had gone with a message from General Stuart to General Jackson, then in the Shenandoah Valley, and was feeding his horse at a station on the Central Railroad, when a squad of Yankee cavalry

came suddenly on him. They captured his despatch, and sent him to the Old Capitol prison. He was soon exchanged, and at Hampton Roads, accidentally heard that Burnside was moving to reinforce Pope at Culpepper. He hurried with the information to General Lee, and it was no doubt that which led Jackson to attack and defeat Pope at Cedar Run.

After that he was never idle, and soon became a terror to the Yankees. He would make a sudden raid, capture a dozen prisoners, and be forty miles away before morning. With his handful of men he did more damage to the Union cause than any regiment in the Southern army."

"But he robbed and murdered unarmed men, and defenceless women," said James, hesitatingly.

"He never did. Some of our men may have committed such outrages; but *he* never robbed or murdered any one. He always discountenanced plundering, and is to-day poorer than when the war began. I know, for I have been with him ever since he has had a battalion."

"And how long has that been?"

"Nearly two years. The exploit which won him the command was one of the most daring in history. Mosby had heard that General Stoughton and sev-

eral other Yankee officers were at Fairfax Court-House, and he determined to capture them. The Union army, at that time, occupied the whole region between Fredericksburg and Alexandria, and strong bodies of infantry and cavalry were stationed in the vicinity of Fairfax and Centreville. Fairfax, in fact, was completely surrounded with Yankee soldiers, and it seemed next to impossible to even approach it ; but Mosby determined to enter the town, and carry off the Yankee commander. Selecting thirty resolute men, he set out one dark, rainy night in November, on the hazardous enterprise. Taking the Little River turnpike, he turned, after a while, into the timber skirting the Warrentown road, to avoid the Union cavalry. The night was very dark, and it was raining heavily. He avoided the Yankee pickets by advancing along the bridle-paths in the woods, and the incessant patter of the rain drowned the tread of the horses. A mile this side of the Court-House he came upon a body of the Federals, and turning to the right, entered the woods again, and approached the town on the southern side. A sleepy vedette was the only obstacle. He was captured without firing a shot, and the troop rode rapidly up to the General's quarters.

“General Stoughton was asleep in one of the

houses near the centre of the town, and taking prisoner the orderly at his door, Mosby entered his bedchamber. Shaking him by the shoulder, he said, 'Get up, General, and come with me?' The General started up, and indignant at Mosby's want of ceremony, exclaimed, —

"'Do you know who I am, sir?'

"'I reckon I do, General. Do *you* know Mosby?'

"'Yes,' answered the General, 'have you got the rascal?'

"'No, but he has got you'; and then to the surprised officer, Mosby explained that he was a prisoner. He was soon dressed, mounted, and, with about thirty others, led away a prisoner.

"Retracing his steps by the way he came, Mosby, about daybreak, passed under the muzzles of the Union guns at Centreville, and in a few hours was safe beyond pursuit with his captives." *

"It was a bold exploit," said James; "the man who did it, had he been fighting for the right, would have been a hero."

* For most of the foregoing statements the writer is indebted to John Esten Cook, Esq., of Virginia, a gentleman of character, and well acquainted with Mosby. The proof-sheets, moreover, have been read and corrected by Colonel Mosby himself, so that the statement conforms to his recollection of the facts.

"He is a hero. He thinks he is fighting for the right; and so do I, though I am going to forsake my colors."

There was a tone of regret in the Captain's words, as if his wild life was showing him all its charms, now that he was about leaving it forever. The boy noticed it, and said, —

"Are you sorry you made up your mind to go home with me?"

"No, not sorry; but at times I ask myself if it's manly to desert my native State at the very time she most needs help?"

"I don't know about that; but it seems to me no good man can live the life you are leading."

"It's no worse than war under any other form, — it is all robbery and murder on a large scale, and can be justified only when done in defence of truth and justice."

"I know; but won't association with your old comrades lead you back into your old courses?"

"It might," answered the Captain, moodily. "At any rate, I'll go with you. The battalion sets out shortly on a raid; and before the fight comes off, we'll slip away at night, and go to the Union lines."

"But is Mosby going on a raid with this small

number of men? There's not a hundred in the whole encampment."

"That's true; but a hundred will join us in the morning, and runners are out who will bring another hundred to the rendezvous by to-morrow night. Mosby never has many men with him except when on an expedition."

"Then this is not your regular camp? There are quarters here for a thousand."

"No, this village was built by a Louisiana regiment, last winter. We have no regular camp, and our men are seldom all together. They are generally young farmers, and are scattered among the small farm-houses along the Ridge in this county. They are subjected to few of the hardships of regular soldiers, but live in families, sleep in beds, and seldom have hard tack and bacon for rations. They live on the fat of the land, and never buckle on their arms except at some call from Mosby. He will go off scouting with a few officers, on his own account, and seeing some chance for a successful operation, will send off couriers for the men to meet him at a rendezvous. Then they come in, and when the work is over, disband again. No one ever knows what is to be done, till we meet at the place appointed. I shall not know what we are going about now, till we get to Major Lucy's."

"Major Lucy's!" exclaimed the boy. "You won't go there; you know that Robert is bent on killing you."

"Yes," answered the Captain, "and I'm not disposed to expose myself needlessly. But the boy will, no doubt, be away. He knows he'd not be safe at the mansion. We can't go off from here; it's forty miles to the nearest Union forces."

An orderly then appeared, announcing that the Captain was wanted at the court-martial; and, leaning on the arm of the boy, he set out for the "tent" of the Sergeant.

The Captain's account of the character and career of the celebrated guerilla is a South-side view; but it is corroborated to me by two or three Southern gentlemen of unimpeachable standing, who could not be induced to misrepresent the truth. It comes, it is true, from his associates; but for a just view of any man we must go to his friends, — for a useful one of ourselves, we may resort to our enemies. A friend may tone down one's faults and heighten one's virtues, and an enemy is very sure to reverse the coloring; but beneath the exaggerations of both it is easy to detect the real likeness. Beyond a question, a majority of the Southern leaders have

been moved by the worst passions and motives that ever actuated humanity ; but, among so many, there must have been some honest men, and this, now that the war is over, the most zealous partisan should be willing to acknowledge.

The darkest stain on the character of Mosby is his execution of four United States soldiers during the campaign of 1864 ; but this, it should be borne in mind, he alleges to have been done in retaliation for the hanging of seven of his own men, a short time before, by the Union General Custer. Unprejudiced lookers-on, however, might not justify us in condemning him for even such an act, until we had given him a full opportunity to be heard in his own defence.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE COURT-MARTIAL.

AT the tent of the Sergeant about a dozen of the guerillas were gathering to decide on the fate of a fellow-being. They were rude men in bushy beards, slouched hats, and the motley homespun, which, time out of mind, has been the fashion in that region ; but as, one by one, they entered the low doorway and took their places around the little table which occupied the centre of the room, they gave the guide a free word or a friendly nod, which told very plainly that only the most direct and positive evidence could induce them to find a verdict against him. He lay on the ground, his head bolstered on a pile of blankets, and Mosby sat near on a camp-stool, looking on, but apparently intending to take no part in the proceedings.

The "court" was organized in the usual way ; and shortly after the entrance of James and the Captain, the Judge Advocate — a stout, burly, red-faced man, whom the others addressed as Major — began the examination of the witnesses.

Three or four of the rangers, who had seen the events at the meeting-house, were at first separately examined; and then a dozen, present when the guide was captured, were admitted to the room together. This struck the Captain as unusual, and as a proceeding which would work favorably for the prisoner; for the kindly feeling of any one of the number would be likely to affect the others, and influence the character of their testimony.

The first witnesses testified to seeing the blacksmith ride away from the old meeting-house, and to a horseman being with him; but who the horseman was, how he looked, or even the color of his clothing, they were unable to distinguish in the dim light and the general confusion.

Of those who were at the bridge, the Sergeant was the first to be examined. "Tell what ye know of the whole, Sergeant," said the Judge Advocate, as the ranger took a seat near the little group of officers. "Don't stop for questions."

"Wall, Major," answered the Sergeant, "I don't know much, no how, and I haint no way in tellin' what I does know; howsomever, I'll do the best I kin. Ye see, the Cap'n he druv Jake away ter the blacksmith's, case it 'peared as how as he was a betrayin' a old man thet had tuck him, a chunk uv a

boy, brung him up, and been a father ter him, — and bein's the Cap'n's a soul about him, he could n't stand thet, no how; as nary other decent man could. Wall, Jake put inter the woods, and I seed him strike a stret line for camp. Arter that I nuver sot eyes on him till I holped him from under his dead nag on the mounting."

"Well, what did you see of him thar? Who was with him?"

"No one, 'cept old Holley; and he war a runnin' away, — a-leavin' Jake ter die loike a dog."

"But before that, — what did you see of them?"

"Nary thing. Two men wus across the bridge, and one on 'em wus a-tearin' up the planks, — but thet wur the blacksmith."

"You saw old Holley running away; did n't Jake try to go with him?"

"No. He did n't lift a leg ter it; I yered him tell the blacksmith he would n't; and when the old man urged him to go, Jake laughed, and telled him ter clar out. Ye see, he know'd he war among friends, and had no 'casion fur runnin'."

A suppressed laugh went round the room when this testimony was given; but in a moment the court resumed its wonted gravity, and the witness went on. "Ye see, Major, I haint no loryer, no more 'n

ye is ; but I kin make all this out, jest as clar as a barr'l uv apple-jack in the eend uv winter. Jake, ye knows, wus druv away by the Cap'n, and I seed him, as I say, tuck a stret line for the mounting. Wall, he rid alang sort o' easy loike, and war n't fur ahead o' us, when he come onter the bridle-way gwine up ter the camp. 'T war natural he'd tuck the path up, instead in gwine ten mile round by the road ; and so, when the blacksmith turned in thar, they come onter one another. Jake know'd the blacksmith, and sot high on him ; and the old feller has a tongue loike a Methodist parson, so he coaxed Jake ter ride along a piece with him. He done it, and thet's how he kim ter be with the blacksmith."

Even Mosby and the Judge Advocate joined in the laugh which followed this singular bit of special pleading, and the latter said : " Why, then, did n't you let Jake go, and shoot the blacksmith ? "

" Wall ; 't war n't my fault thet we did n't. The men fired afore I know'd it."

" But why did n't you shoot the blacksmith ? "

" We had orders ter bring him in alive."

" That's true," said Mosby, laughing. " I gave the order, Major ; and you see, the Sergeant carried it out to the letter. As soon as he could he stopped the firing."

Two other witnesses were then examined, and they testified very much in the manner of the Sergeant. When the last had concluded, the prosecuting officer turned to Mosby, and said: "Cunnel, it's no use, we can't get enough out of these men to hang a scarecrow. I've no doubt Jake got the blacksmith away, but it can't be proved; and evidently the troop want to let him off. If you don't object, I'll drop the proceedings."

"Do as you please. I shall not interfere," said Mosby.

With this the Advocate turned to the guide, saying: "Jake, you done it, — we know you done it; but we reckon you meant no wrong to the country; so we let you off without going on with the trial; but, another time, be sure you don't help so big a traitor as old Holley."

"I thanks ye, Major, I'll be sure o' thet," said the guide, "for I reckons thar haint nary nother quite so big as he in all Virginny. The old man allers went the whole figger; and this ar' a life-and-death business, — so ye sees he's in dead airnest."

With a few more friendly words the members of the court passed out of the tent, and the guide was left alone with the white boy and the two officers. Raising himself on his elbow, he said to Mosby: "Cunnell,

I sees yer hand in this, — I seed it all along in the way the thing was managed. I owes my life ter ye, and I haint ungrateful. I'll guv it fur ye onyway or aryhaw that 'll show ye I ar' a white man."

The guerilla rested his head on his hand for a moment, then looked up and said: "No, Jake; I trusted you, and you've betrayed me. I can't trust you again. You must leave the troop."

The guide's voice trembled a little as he replied: "Ye *kin* trust me, Cunnell. I allers loiked ye, and this makes me love ye as ef ye wus my mother."

Again the guerilla rested his head on his hand for a moment. Then he said again: "No, Jake; it can't be. I never trusted man or woman twice. You must go. The troop moves to-night. Where shall I send you?"

The guide drew a long breath before he answered: "Anywhar, Cunnel. Thar's a gal up ter Snicker's as I reckon 'll nuss me till I kin git round ag'in. Then I'll set out ter find old Miles, — that is, if ye've no 'jection."

"Where is he?" asked Mosby, hastily.

"Safe in the Union lines by this time, I reckon."

"Then you'll join the Yankees after all," said the guerilla.

"No, Cunnel," answered Jake; "but ef I can n't

fight with ye, I'll let old Virginny shirk fur herself."

An hour later the guide, laid on a pile of blankets in the bottom of the blacksmith's wagon, was driven off, under escort of one of the rangers, up the road leading along the east of the Ridge. About an hour before sunset this vehicle, slowly climbing the mountain-road, came in sight of the party of Union troops which, hidden in the woods by the wayside, were awaiting the darkness that should cover their movements.

"It is my wagon, and right from Mosby's camp," said the blacksmith, springing upon the nearest horse, and galloping into the highway in front of the vehicle. A dozen cavalymen followed; but before they reached the road, the blacksmith, drawing a pistol from his holster, had halted the startled trooper.

Saying, "I surrender," the man laid down his carbine, and the loyalist rode up to the wagon. "What, Jake! Is it you?" he cried, as he caught sight of the half-sleeping guide on the floor of the vehicle.

"Bless my eyes! Is it ye, Boss?" shouted Jake, raising himself on his elbow. "Has ye dropped from the clouds, or whar has ye come from?"

Mutual explanations followed; and in a few moments the blacksmith understood the cause of the guide's sudden appearance.

"Is Mosby still on the mountain?" asked the Major, who had ridden up to the wagon.

"I can't tell ye, sir," answered the guide, glancing at the other's uniform. "Till three hours back I served under him."

"But you don't now; and these are our friends, Jake," said the blacksmith.

"*Yer* friends, ye mean, Boss, not mine. I'd die sooner'n I'd tell on Mosby; and *ye* will too, Sam, ef thar's a morsel uv a man in ye," said the guide, addressing the last words to the ranger who was still seated on the front of the wagon.

"But, Jake, if you tell, you may save bloodshed. The Major was going with me to rescue you and take Mosby. If he knows his real strength and whereabouts, he may turn back again," said the blacksmith.

"I advise him not ter go. I can't say no more," replied the guide, stretching himself out again upon the floor of the wagon.

"It is no use to say more," said the blacksmith, turning to the Major. "If Jake says he 'won't, he won't. Mosby has no doubt moved from his camp; if he had n't, he would not have sent Jake away."

"My man," now said the Major to the ranger,

"tell us where Mosby is, and how many men are with him, and we will let you go."

The man looked around on the column of cavalry, as if taking their census, and then very deliberately said to the officer, "Does ye mean what ye says? Will ye let me loose if I tells ye?"

"Yes. You can go the moment we come in sight of Mosby's forces."

"But I mought n't want ter go thet way; the climate mought be summut onhealthy ter a man as had peached on the Cunnel. Let me go along with Jake and the wagon."

"Ye carn't go with me," said the guide, raising himself upon his elbow, and giving the ranger a look of intense scorn. "I 'd die in the road sooner 'n be holped by a man as is willin' ter betray his comrades."

"Shet up, Jake," said the other, "none uv yer preachin' ter me: doan't I know ye holped old Holley?"

The guide made no reply; and the Major said, "Well, my man, what do you say?"

"I 'll tell ye what ye wants, ef ye 'll drap me when ye comes within a mile uv the Cunnel."

"We will do it."

"Wall; he's left the mounting two hours ago, and

ag'in this time ar' more 'n half way ter Major Lucy's. He haint eighty men, and won't hev a dozen more 'fore ter-morrer at sundown."

"It 'r a lie, Major, and he knows it," cried Jake, the same look of intense scorn on his features. "He 's sayin' it only ter trap ye."

"It haint a lie," said the man, looking the Union officer squarely in the face. "Jake owes his life ter the Cunnel, and he reckons one good turn desarnes another. I haint no sich sentiments, — só I tells ye the truth ; fur, atween us, I don't keer ter see the inside uv a Yankee prison."

The officer glanced keenly from one man to the other, then said to the blacksmith, "What do you think, Mr. Holley ; which of these men tells the truth ?"

"Jake never told a lie, and I 've known him since he could talk. You had better turn back, and get to the lines as soon as possible."

"And I 've known this man since I was born," now said the slave boy, who had stood by, an interested listener to this conversation. "He has no motive to mislead you. He knows that if he did, you would shoot him down before he could get away. Mosby thinks Mr. Holley has gone back to his home, and has set out with a small party to take him."

"That 's true," added the ranger. "That darky 's more sense nor a million o' white men."

A half hour's conversation followed ; and at its close the Union officer ordered his troop to horse, and started on the route leading down the mountain. At the same time the blacksmith, declining to go with the party, mounted the wagon, and drove off with the guide in the direction of the Union army.

Their progress was slow, and it was not far from midnight when the vehicle which bore the wounded man turned into a narrow path sloping gently up from the highway in the vicinity of Snicker's Gap. There, half way up the ridge, and in the midst of a small opening, stands a low-roofed log-cottage ; and before this cottage the wagon drew up, and the blacksmith, alighting, rapped long and loudly at the doorway. All was dark and silent within ; but at last a woman's voice was heard at the window, "Who ar' ye, and what ar' wanted?" it asked.

"It 's me,— Miles Holley," answered the blacksmith, "and Jake is with me, wounded."

"Jake wounded !" screamed the woman, throwing up the sash, and thrusting her head out into the darkness. "Ar' he bad hurt?"

"No, not bad, Sally," replied the wounded man. "It 'll lay me up a month or so, — that 's all. But

clap on yer clo'es, and holp me inter the house. The boss must be twenty mile away by sun-up."

"Yes, yes, I know. I yered ye'd slipped the noose, Mr. Holley; and I'se right glad on it, though yer politics ar' bad enough ter ruin the whole dees-trict."

With this the woman disappeared, and soon a light shone through the window. In a few moments the woman emerged from the doorway, accompanied by an older one bearing a torch of lightwood. The younger had all the outward characteristics of the women of her class, — an olive skin, jet black hair and eyes, and a lithe, graceful figure, — and her face bore traces of recent weeping. As she approached the wagon the guide lifted himself upon his elbow, and threw his disengaged arm about her neck in the manner of young people under certain circumstances. "I'se right glad to git to ye, Sally," he said; "but what on yearth ar' the matter? Ye looks as if thar'd been another deluge."

"I'se been a cryin' my eyes out for ye, Jake," said the girl, gently repelling his caresses. "Ye ugly feller, to go along and git yerself inter sich a scrape, and all for a ole traitor. Ef ye'd, been hanged, 't would have served ye right; but I'd never ha' forgiven ye — never."

"Yes, you would, Sally," said the blacksmith, laughing; "you'd do the same thing yourself, if you wore trousers."

"That's so, — she would," said the older woman; "and we'll hide ye now, Mr. Holley, for all of Mosby, or the old man inter the bargain."

"I know you would," answered the blacksmith, evidently affected; "but Jake is right: I must be twenty miles away by sunrise. Let us get him into the house, so I may be going."

The wagon was then wheeled up to the doorway, and Jake was soon borne to the bed recently vacated by the two women. There he was left by the blacksmith, who, mounted on a fresh horse, given him by the Rebel women, was, an hour before morning, snugly hidden in the house of a friend miles away at the northward. There he lay during the day, and setting out again at night, soon entered the Union lines at Harper's Ferry.

CHAPTER XX.

THE NIGHT ATTACK.

DID you never think how much beauty night and shadow give to the world, — how dreary it would be if it were all one waste of sunshine, with no clouds to obscure, no vapors to soften the ceaseless glare ; with no night with its silent stars, no twilight with its gathering shadows ? And what night and shadow are to the world, are not trial and sorrow to the soul ? Do they not cover it with beauty, lend it a radiance “ that never was on land or sea,” — a radiance that falls from the eternal stars, which shine forever above the clouds, however dark the night, however thick the shadows that surround our lives ?

Old Katy’s life had been full of shadow ; but now, as she sat in the desolate mansion, looking out into the night, she saw the stars a-shining, — shining as they shone that night when the angels sang, “ Peace on earth, good-will toward men.” She thought of her grandson as dead, or, with the brand of Cain upon him, a wanderer in the world ; and yet those

words were in her ears, the radiance of that silent starlight was in her soul.

Long she sat there, looking out into the night and listening to every sound that the wind wafted through the still woods; but at last she rose, and, going out upon the lawn, bent her ear low to the ground. Sounding, far away, was a faint roar, like the distant rumbling of a storm gathering in the forest. Louder it grew, until it came down on the night with the dull roll of the ocean lashed by the wind. It was a troop of horse guerillas, and they could tell of her grandson! Thinking only of this, she rushed out into the road, and soon caught sight of their arms, now glittering in the moonlight, now hidden by the trees. Swiftly they came on, and, almost before she was aware, had encircled her in the highway. "What is ye a doin' yere, old 'ooman?" shouted one. "A little more 'n I 'd run ye down."

"Where am Robby? tell me, whar am de chile?"

"What child?" said the man who seemed to be the leader, as the rest came to a halt.

"My Robby. Major Lucy's Robby. My own chile," cried the old woman, forgetting, in her anxiety for her grandson, that all the world did not know him, and the errand he had been on.

"We don't know," answered the man. "Is this Major Lucy's?"

"Yes, dis am de Major's. Oh! whar am Robby? Can't nobody tell?"

"Nobody here. Go back to the house, Aunty, and keep quiet. Perhaps the Colonel knows; he'll be here before morning."

Old Katy went back, and the men rode silently in at the gate, and deployed on the lawn in front of the mansion. Then a few low orders were given, and they scattered among the trees and negro cabins, and soon the place was as quiet and apparently as deserted as it had been an hour before. Sitting down on the door-steps, old Katy looked out again into the night, and suddenly, as she looked, a rocket shot up into the air from the woods in the direction of the blacksmith's. In a moment it was answered by another from the rear of the house, and then she heard the same far-off roar, like the distant rumbling of the storm or the heavy roll of the ocean when lashed by the wind. Quickly it came on again, and before another hour the head of a column of horsemen emerged from the trees at the west of the mansion, and rode rapidly into the high-road.

"It 'm dem! It 'm Mosby!" she cried, springing to her feet, and hastening to the gateway. But a bayonet barred her passage.

"No, you don't," said a sentinel, rising like a ghost from among the bushes bordering the highway. "Not another step, old woman."

"I only wants ter see de Cunnel. I only wants ter larn about Robby," she cried, imploringly.

"Well, you can't see the Cunnel," answered the man. "You go back, or you'll see stars mighty sudden."

Reluctantly she went back to her seat on the doorsteps, while the column of cavalry came out of the woods, and, leaping the fences, gathered round the desolate mansion. Her mind was too intently engaged with one thought to notice their number, but it was at least two hundred. Soon one she knew rode slowly up to the gateway. Heedless of the sentinel's warning, she rushed towards him, and cried out: "O Cap'n, Cap'n! de Lord be praised, it 'm you, and you haint dead. Whar am de chile,—whar am Robby?"

The horseman halted, and, bending over his saddlebow, said kindly: "I don't know. He got away at the blacksmith's."

"I knows; but he follered you,—did n't you see him ag'in at de ole meetin'-house?"

"Yes; but he got away again. He's in the Union lines by this time."

While a score of troopers gathered round in mute amazement, the old negress sank to her knees, and, stretching up her arms to the sky, cried out: "De Lord be tanked, de good Lord be tanked. He 'm safe, and de Cap'n haint murdered!"

While she spoke, the same dull roar sounded again far away at the west, and a lithe, slenderly built man, springing from his horse, and bending closely to the ground, cried out: "What is that? None of the troop are coming from that direction."

In a moment he rose, and, turning to one of the men, said: "Sergeant, your ears are good; tell me how many they are, and how far away."

The Sergeant dismounted, and, putting his ear down until it almost touched the grass, listened long and intently. Then he answered: "About a mile away, Cunnel, and nigh onter two hundred, I reckon."

"Up with a blue rocket," said the Colonel, quickly, bending again to the ground, and listening.

The rocket soon rose with a rushing sound, and exploding high overhead, scattered into a shower of little stars, which floated awhile in the air, and then went out in the darkness. Suddenly there was a pause in the rumbling noise, and then an answering rocket rose in the distance, and, scattering like the first, it too went out in the darkness.

"Strange, strange," said the Colonel, leaping again upon his horse. "It is the signal ; but they can't be our men, — they are too many. A dozen of you tear down the fence, to give play for the horses ; the rest into line in the shadow of the trees. We must see them before they see us."

These orders were promptly executed, and, meanwhile, the sounds rose again on the air, and came rapidly nearer. James, who had ridden to the rendezvous by the side of the Captain, had then dismounted, and was standing in conversation with the old negress, when the trooper said to him : "My boy, there is likely to be a brush ; lead your horse to the rear, and then go into the house with Auntie ; and mind, if there's any firing, don't come near the windows."

The boy obeyed, and soon joined old Katy in the parlor of the mansion. Posting themselves so as to command a view of the road by which the sounds were approaching, they breathlessly awaited the arrival of the strange horsemen, — the boy with the unquiet feeling with which a spectator looks forward to a deadly collision ; the woman with that vague presentiment which so often gives warning of some coming evil.

They were not long in waiting. A half hour had

not passed when a column of blue-coats rode out of the wood a quarter of a mile away, and came rapidly forward, their arms gleaming in the moonlight. "They are Yankees," said Mosby, riding along the front of his line. "Give them a volley at a hundred yards, and then upon them with the sabre."

Quietly the men unslung their carbines; a breathless moment followed, then the word "Fire" rung out on the air, and, before they were aware of the presence of an enemy, a storm of bullets tore through the advancing column, sending a score to the ground, and scattering the rest in momentary confusion. But the confusion was only momentary. At the quick voice of their leader they rallied, and, making a stand in the edge of the woods, sent back a volley which laid many a gray warrior at rest forever.

But the Rebels were two to their one; and, unmindful of the leaden storm, they were now pressing on with uplifted sabres to mow down the little band of blue-coats. Bravely they held their ground, and, for a few moments, the conflict was terrible; but flesh and blood could not long withstand such a hurricane. One by one they went down, until thirty were stretched on the green grass or the stony highway, dead or dying; and then the rest turned and galloped away, some along the road, others among the thick underbrush which skirted the forest behind them.

At the very beginning of the fray, James, from his stand at the window of the mansion, had singled out one of the combatants with whose form he was familiar. He was a mere stripling, but, mounted on a powerful, gray horse, he fought as if possessed with the spirit of a demon. The Union volley was just discharged, and the Rebel column was pressing on in its resistless charge, when he spurred his horse from the ranks, and straight at a little knot of rangers, among whom was the Captain. Straight at him he rode, and their swords crossed before the trooper knew with whom he was confronted. But for only a moment was he in ignorance ; for, as the other dealt at him a tremendous blow, he cried out, "I have you now. Now you shall not escape me."

A film gathered before the trooper's eyes, and weakly parrying the blow, he cried to the men around, "Disarm him, — unhorse him ; but do not hurt him, on your lives."

In an instant a dozen rangers were upon the single horseman, and with one sweep of the Sergeant's sword, his arm and his sabre were both gone from him forever. He uttered a yell, half of pain, half of rage, and his head sank almost to his saddle-bow. The rangers thought it the sign of surrender, for their uplifted weapons fell harmless ; but the youth

spurred his horse forward, and with his left hand grasped the pistol in his holster. In a second more its two balls were buried, one in the Captain's breast, the other in the neck of his horse, and horse and rider went to the earth, the man under the dying animal. A dozen rangers sprang to the ground to disentangle the wounded man, and as many more encircled the infuriated stripling. As James saw this from the window, he rushed out upon the lawn, crying: "It is Robert. He has killed the Captain." And the old negress followed. The boy went straight to his wounded friend, the negress to her insane grandson.

The Captain was stretched upon the ground, and one of the rangers was supporting his head, another tying a ligature about his side, from which the blood was running in a rivulet. His eyes were open, and he was speaking. "Tell them not to hurt the boy," he said, "not to hurt him, if they love me."

James knelt by his side, took his hand in his, and said, "O, I hope you're not much hurt,—not much hurt."

"O yes, my boy, it's all over with me, now,—all over with me—*here*," he gasped. Then, turning his face to the man who was holding his head, and down whose bronzed cheeks the tears were trick-

ling, he added : "This is the boy, Colonel. You 'll see he gets safely home to his mother?"

"Yes, yes, I will," answered the man, — who was Mosby. "Can I do anything more for you?"

The dying man shook his head, and said nothing. His eyes were open, but they seemed fixed on something in the distance ; and when he spoke again, his words were slower, weaker. "Come nearer, boy," he said, after a while. "Nearer." The boy bent down closely, and wiped away the cold sweat which was already gathering on the dying man's forehead.

"God bless you, boy," he said, pressing the boy's face to his. In a moment more he added : "It's growing dark, — dark, — but now — it brightens." Soon, but only in a hoarse whisper, he spoke again. "It is bright now, boy, — very bright," he said, "and *she* is here !" Then suddenly stretching out his arms, with a louder voice, he cried : "Yes, I 'm coming, — just as I am, — I 'm coming !" Then his head fell back, his arms dropped to his side, and he was over the narrow way that divides this world from that beyond the silent river.

Meanwhile, another immortal soul was groping its way along the dark valley. A pure spirit was bending above it, wildly praying the good Father to take

his lost child again to his bosom ; but the words fell unheeded on the ear of the dying ; and when the moonlight faded out of his eyes, it was not the gentle breeze, it was the midnight storm that was gathered on his features.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

ABOUT a month after the events narrated in the last chapter, the boy, whose adventures among the Rebels this little book has recorded, was seated by a window in the room which he saw in his dream that night when he lay in the old meeting-house at the cross-roads. It was late at night, a candle was burning dimly on the centre-table, and a woman, not old nor yet young, sat by it, reading. Another woman sat near, listening. Her body was bent, and her face was black; but her hair was of a snowy whiteness,—blanched, it may be, in a single night, by some great sorrow. The younger woman was reading the words of the disciple whom Jesus loved,—the disciple whose only sermon in his old age, when for nearly a hundred years he had tasted the love of God, was,

“LITTLE CHILDREN, LOVE ONE ANOTHER.”

The younger woman read: “I hear a voice from heaven saying unto me, ‘Write. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.’”

The younger woman read this ; but the words were scarcely uttered when the older one sprang to her feet, staggered a step or two forward, then sunk to the floor, and, throwing up her arms, cried out, " Even so, Lord Jesus, come ! Come quickly ! "

The boy and his mother sprang to their feet, and rushed to the fallen woman ; but, before they reached her, the candle, burning low in its socket, went out, — went out on the earth, but only to be lit again in a better world, where it will burn forever.

And here ends all that I can tell you, of my own knowledge, in regard to the persons who have figured in this short history. The war is over ; and though the hot passions it aroused are yet not altogether cooled, let us hope that the weapons of death it called forth are thoroughly beaten into ploughshares and pruning-hooks.

The end of the war allowed Jake and Mr. Holley to return to Virginia. Arrived there, the first thing that Jake did was to build for his employer a snug cabin on the ruins of the old mansion ; the next, to find the rifle-barrel he had lost on the mountain, and to fashion it into a huge horse-shoe, which he nailed over the door of the blacksmith-shop, in token of good-will to all comers. This I have learned from a

friend who, late in the autumn of 1865, visited on horseback the battle-fields of the Old Dominion. I had previously related to him the facts which I have woven into this little story, and curiosity led him to ride over the ground that witnessed the stirring events I have so feebly described. There, oddly enough, he met Jake and the blacksmith, and what he saw and heard, as faithfully as I can, I will tell you.

It was not far from noon on a pleasant day in September, when he came in sight of the triangular piece of ground on which had stood the blacksmith's house and outbuildings. Smoke was issuing from the chimney of the shop, and a man was at work within, and singing merrily, as with a ponderous sledge he hammered out the horse-shoes. Over the door swung a sign, which, in black letters on a white ground, said to the passer-by :

JACOB YEARDON ;
BLACKSMITH,
AND VETERINARY SURGEON.

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES,
LIVE PEACEABLY WITH ALL MEN.

Amused at this odd blending of business and religion, the traveller reined up his horse and said to

the man within, "Then Mr. Holley does not live here now?"

The man paused in his work, and looking up, answered, "Live here? Well, he do; and I reckon he'll never live no whar else, now that ole Virginny's got back inter the Union."

The traveller then explained who he was, and expressed a wish to meet Mr. Holley; and the man, rolling down his sleeves, and putting on his hat, promptly replied, "Sartin, stranger, I'll tuck ye ter the house. The old man'll be glad ter see ye. He allers had a weakness for ye Yankees; and I'm durned ef I has n't sort o' tuck ter ye myself, sense ye whaled us so handsomely."

The traveller laughed, and replied good-humoredly, "I've 'tuck ter ye,'—your name is Jake!"

The man started in surprise, and with a look half serious, half comic, answered: "No it tain't. That's what it used ter was, in my fighting days, when I war a young man; but now the war's over, I'se married, and folks call me Jacob,—Jacob Yeardon, blacksmith and veteran surgeon."

"And your rules of life are, 'Love your enemies: live peaceably with all men?'" said the traveller, again laughing.

"So the sign says, stranger; but that's the old

man's doin's. He meant ter guv every one fa'r warnin' that ef they smote him on one cheek he'd turn the tother. That's the doctrine ; but I reckon it's hard ter live it, 'cept you's as nigh ter heaven as old Miles and Ma'am Holley."

The traveller then dismounted, and hitching his horse to a post near the smithy, walked on with Jake toward the dwelling. It was a low-roofed cabin, built of rough logs to which the bark still was clinging, and it was divided by a broad passage-way into two tenements. At the door of the nearer one they were met by a tidily-dressed young woman, with dark hair and eyes, and a face more cheerful than the brightest day of summer. She made the traveller a low courtesy, and, turning to him, Jake said, "Stranger, this ar' my wife ; as ye knows me, ye orter know Sally."

The traveller held out his hand, saying that he had heard of her, and was glad to make her acquaintance ; and she led the way into the parlor of the rude dwelling. The room had a bare floor, and was furnished with only a few cheap chairs and a pine table, on which were piled a number of books and some newspapers. A one-armed man, with a furrowed face, and long gray hair, sat at the table reading ; and as they entered Jake said to him, "Yerè ar' a Yankee, Boss,

as has come half way round the world ter see ye, and go over the ground in the Wilderness.”

The blacksmith rose and greeted the stranger courteously, and, sitting down, the two were soon well acquainted. After dinner they walked out upon the lawn, and under the shade of a great elm went over the war together. The blacksmith was much broken, but his wife was left to him, and he had learned from the blessed Book which tells us that the dead are “not lost, but gone before,” to bear with resignation the parting from his children. To Jake he had given all he had except the few acres which held the ruins of his homestead, and, consoled by his devoted attachment, he was patiently waiting the summons which should call him to join the great army of the immortals.

The traveller stayed with him over night, and on the following day they went over the battle-ground together. They rode down the narrow road by which the rangers had come when they burned the blacksmith's dwelling, and halted when they came to the old shanty in the Wilderness. On the cleared plot before its door Bursley and his wife were at work, and accosting them, the blacksmith said, “Well, John, how do you get on? how is the prospect for the winter?”

"Pore, Boss, mighty pore," answered the man. "The crop has been bad, very bad, and things never luck'd wuss, — never, sense I come inter this world uv trouble."

Now this, to those who know how to live, is a good sort of world, — probably as good as any in the universe, — so Bursley's remark gave the blacksmith an excellent chance for moralizing on the blessings of contentment and starvation. Probably twelve "serious-minded" men in a dozen would have improved the occasion, and have stuffed the poor white man with a sermon when he needed only corn-bread and bacon.* But the blacksmith was not a "serious-minded" man. He thought God could do his own preaching, (and he generally does do it, and very effectually, by affliction,) so he only said, "I am sorry. Come down to the smithy. I reckon Jake will give you work enough to get you through the winter."

"I don't know, Boss," said the poor man, a tear rolling down his cheek. "I'se allers thort Jake war sort o' down on me ever sense — ever sense I turned my back on ye ter the old meetin'-house."

* Lest the young reader should misunderstand me, I will say that I have a high opinion of sermons. They are excellent things in their way, and on proper occasions; and perhaps it is only with starving men and women that they can be profitably omitted.

“O no ! He never laid that up against you. *I* never blamed you. Come, and I promise you shall be kept from want during the winter.”

The “God-bless-ye” which answered this remark touched the heart of the traveller. It is such God-bless-you’s that light a good man’s way to heaven.

The two rode on, and a short half-hour brought them to the scene of Old Katy’s many sorrows. The mansion had been burned during one of the many conflicts which had occurred in its vicinity, and only a pile of blackened beams marked the site of the once stately dwelling. Picking their way among the ruins, the two went on to a far corner of the courtyard. There they paused before a couple of low mounds, overgrown with grass, and guarded by rude head-boards ; and the blacksmith said to his companion, —

“Here they lie,—the murderer and the murdered. Who shall judge them but He who knows all they sinned and all they suffered?”

CHAPTER THE LAST.

THE SUM OF THE WHOLE.

EVERY one remembers a certain artist, who, after painting a "neighing steed," wrote underneath the picture, "This is a horse," lest it should be mistaken for an alligator. I am tempted to imitate his example, lest the young reader, otherwise, may not discover my full purpose in writing this little volume. My object, as I said at the beginning, is not so much to tell a story, as to draw a series of portraits which shall depict the different classes of Southern society, — the "mean whites," the "poor whites," the "chivalry," the "negroes," and the mixed race in which the blood of the white and the black is mingled in various proportions.

In so short a story, introducing so small a number of people, I have not been able to portray all the characteristics of all the classes at the South; and that is my apology for adding this supplementary chapter, which, at first sight, may seem like a fifth wheel to a coach, or like a piece added on to a tail already — as a tale — long enough in all conscience.

The conscript Bursley and his wife are meant to be types of the "mean whites," and their wretched hovel is intended as a specimen of the houses in which these people live all over the South. They are far below the negroes in all that makes civilization and manhood, and do scarcely any work, — either begging their bread from the planter or stealing it from his fields and forests. They can neither read nor write, and are ignorant of the simplest elements of knowledge ; such as that the earth is round, that five and five are ten, and that, to produce any result, use must be made of the appropriate means. About all that they do know is that they have a voice in electing men to office ; though what those men do when in office, or how their action concerns them, they have no idea whatever.

They have, heretofore, sold their votes to the planter for the wretched privilege of living in some miserable hut, or of foraging at night on his patch of corn and potatoes ; and this is what has made them a very dangerous class ; for it was largely by their votes that the "chivalry" were, before the war, enabled to rule the South, and control, to so great an extent, the legislation of the whole country. These four years of conflict and carnage have taught these people nothing ; and, if they have the power, they will again

support the planters. So we must look to it that the "chivalry" are not again eligible for office, or again allowed any voice in the control of the nation.

They are totally destitute of morals and religion, and live in open violation of almost all laws, human and divine. Fathers cohabit with daughters, brothers with sisters; and husbands sell or barter away their wives, just as they would their jackknives or their rusty rifles. Many of them never heard of the Bible, and few know there is a world beyond this, and that the lives we live here determine the lives we shall enter upon hereafter. On all this broad earth there is not a class of white people so ignorant and so degraded as they are; and all their ignorance and degradation has been brought about by the "chivalry," who have deprived them of schools, and kept them in mental and moral darkness, that they might make them the servile tools and pliant instruments of their reckless and wicked ambition.

The class is not large, and it is well it is not; for if it were, the thorough reconstruction and regeneration of the South would be things which the youngest of you might not live to see, so far away would it be in the very dim distance. It is impossible to estimate their number with any exactness, there being no sufficient data on which to found a reckoning; but the

opinion of those best informed on the subject, and long observation in all parts of the South, have led me to the conclusion that it cannot exceed a million.

The class at the South next higher in the social scale is the "poor whites," and they comprise the great mass of the Southern people, and, before the war, numbered at least five millions. They are of different grades, and the lower strata are not much above the "mean whites" in either mental or moral cultivation; but they all do what the other class does not do, that is, they work with their hands or their heads, and so add something to the wealth and comfort of the world. Perhaps one half of them cannot read or write; but the fact that they labor lifts them above the "mean whites," for only "the idle mind is the Devil's workshop." The three principal grades of this class — ascending in the order in which they are here named — I have endeavored to depict in the Sergeant, the Guide, and the Blacksmith.

These people are the real hope of the South, and the Union cannot be fully reconstructed until they are educated, made acquainted with the true principles of our government, and brought back to hearty loyalty to the country. They must be given the political power which the "chivalry" have so wickedly abused, and thus be made the real South of the future.

Then, and not until then, will the Union rest on a foundation that cannot be shaken,—the foundation on which the North has risen to be so great and free,—the strong arms and stout hearts of its working population.

The “poor whites” are of the samé ancestry as ourselves, and therefore are of about the best blood in the world. A large majority of the early settlers of both sections of the Union were English, Scotch, and Scotch-Irish yeomen, and from them the Southern as well as the Northern workingman is descended. These yeomen brought from the mother-country the same language, the same customs, and the same religion: but among the Northern settlers were very few of the English aristocracy, while among the Southern were very many, and aristocracy of the worst sort,—broken-down noblemen, needy adventurers, and portionless younger sons of country gentlemen.

The Northern settlers established universal suffrage, and secured the division of land into small farms by providing for the equal inheritance of property. The Southern settlers gave only landowners the right of ballot, obtained extensive land-grants from the crown, and built up and secured to their children large estates by establishing primogeniture. Thus, at the

very outset, one section became a virtual democracy, which fostered freedom ; the other, an oligarchy, which encouraged slavery.

To this discordance in the original constitution of things at the North and at the South may be traced all the differences which now exist in the habits, customs, and characters of the people of the two sections. To this it is owing that the Northern workingman of to-day is clad like a gentleman, sends his children to school, reads his Bible, goes to meeting on Sundays, takes the newspapers, and has fallen in love with freedom. And to this it is also owing that the Southern workingman goes in ragged "butternuts," never sends his children to school, never takes the newspapers, does up his religion at a camp-meeting, once a year in a lump, and has fallen in love with slavery.

But, in spite of these differences, the Northern and Southern yeomen are essentially alike. Both are brave and enterprising, — both tenacious of their rights, — both loyal to what they think is liberty, — and both have the practical wisdom that "trusts in the Lord, but keeps its powder dry," which is one of the best legacies left us by our ancestors. If one is now a marble statue, rounded and perfect as any ever chiselled by a sculptor, and the other a rough

block, unhewn and unseemly as when it came from the everlasting hills, it is because freedom and democracy have moulded the one, slavery and despotism crushed the other.

These people being thus of one blood and one origin, you might get a tolerable idea of the Southern workingman by dressing up one of our Northern farmers in "butternut" homespun and a slouched hat ; giving him a huge wig, a patriarchal beard, and a half-pound quid of tobacco, and then asking him to swear all the unpronounceable oaths in the language. But as he could, by no possibility, swear quite so hard as the Southerner, and as he would, after all, represent only the body, and not the soul, of his "Southern brother," I will tell you how the latter looks and lives a little more in detail.

His house is usually a one-story log-cabin, nicely whitewashed, and chinked with clay. It has generally two apartments on the ground-floor, and one of them — the sitting-room — is furnished with a tidy rag carpet, an old-fashioned sideboard, an unpainted pine table, and a few chairs with rustic frames and deerskin coverings. It is an humble dwelling, but it generally contains a Bible, a copy of Watts's Hymns, and about as much simple-hearted goodness as is found in statelier mansions.

His farm is perhaps from one to two hundred acres, and not thoroughly cultivated ; for the Southern farmer is not obliged to work thirteen months in the year to force a scanty living from a sorry patch of stones and potatoes, or to sharpen the noses of his sheep to enable them to get at the thin grass which grows among the rocks. He simply throws the seed into the soil, and, almost without labor, it springs up into an abundant harvest.

The men of this class are generally tall and well formed, with gaunt, loose-jointed frames, wiry, black hair, keen, restless eyes, simple, confiding manners, and a certain air of self-possession which indicates that, if they know little of the world, they feel fully able to cope with what little they do know. The women are comely and dark-eyed, with clear, olive complexions, full, well-rounded forms, and an artless grace and lovingness that tempts one to exclaim,—if he happens to be a bachelor,—“What an everlasting pity it is that she dips snuff, chews tobacco, and goes without shoes and stockings!”

If you should stay a day or two at one of their houses, you would know them as well as you might know some other people in as many years. You would find the women industrious, chaste, loving, and religious ; the men brave, hardy, energetic, simple

hearted, earnest in their convictions, good husbands and fathers, and, in short, possessed of as much of the "raw material" of a noble manhood as any people on the earth. What they most need is education; and before we readmit the Southern States to the privileges of the Union, we should see to it that they make provision for giving to this class free schools and a free press, which shall make them acquainted with the true nature of republican institutions. If we do this, they soon will be the equals of the Northern workingman, and ere long will make the South the garden of this continent.

✓ "Captain Thompson" is a representative of the "chivalry," and what of them his career does not illustrate is told in the story by the blacksmith; so I need not say more; and the fact is, the less that is said about this class the better; for, beyond a doubt, they are the vilest white men in the universe. I have never been on any other planet, but have travelled pretty extensively over this, and seen all varieties of people; and, therefore, when I speak thus of the "chivalry," "I know whereof I affirm." They are those who brought on the war, who starved our prisoners at Salisbury and Andersonville, butchered our brave boys when battles were over, and made their bones into trinkets for their worthless mistresses

This is enough to say of them ; but, if you would know more, ask the negroes, whom they have scourged and debauched for two centuries, or the working white men, whom they have mislead, and trodden on, and driven like sheep to the slaughter. They can and will tell you.

But, thank God, the "chivalry" are not the South. They are only a handful, — numbering, all told, scarcely three hundred thousand ; and yet, before the war, a hundred and eighty thousand of them owned three fourths of the slaves and landed property of the South, and held all of its political power. But that day is past ; and, if we do not wantonly throw away the fruit of our victory, the reign of the "chivalry" is gone with it forever.

"Old Katy" is a type of the better class of blacks, and her kindly nature and religious devotion are characteristic of a very large portion of the Southern negroes. It is not because they have nothing earthly to cling to, that they so love their "Massa Lord" and "Massa Jesus," but because their natures are more open than ours, — more receptive of the influences which fall from the upper sky, where dwell the angels and the pure and good of all ages. I should not now be alive to tell you stories but for the tender watching of an old negress whose portrait I

have tried to sketch in old Katy. Her form now is bent, her limbs now are feeble, and on her head have settled the snows of more than eighty winters ; but from the Pisgah height where she lives she hourly sees the glories of the land that is promised. It may be that my love for her has clouded my vision, and made me, these many years, see graces in the negro character which the most of her race do not exhibit ; but I am not conscious that it has. At any rate, I have *tried* to think and to write of them truthfully.

The heart of the negro is larger than ours, his love is stronger. This makes him in daily life cheerful, joyous, and happy ; and in seasons of religious interest it lifts his soul into regions which, to our reasoning race, will, in this world, ever be untrodden. At such times his nature is all aglow with affection, and in his churches an influence goes forth which fills the very air, and inevitably melts and softens the most abandoned and hardened. Then his prayers have a power which seems something more than human, — which, perhaps, opens the heavenly gates, and brings troops of angels down to these poorest of the earth's children. Then, too, he will tell you that he beholds visions, sees the glories of the better land, walks its golden streets, and worships in its dim cathedrals.

And who knows that he does not? Because our eyes are closed, are his unopened? For his earthly life of want and sorrow may there not be this heavenly compensation?

But this ecstatic love, which so lifts him above our cold world, disposes the negro to many social vices, and makes him, in coming together with others of his class, not always mindful of moral obligation. Some one has said that many broad avenues lead to his heart, while his brain is approached by only a narrow footpath. This is true; but Nature has compensated for this lack of reason by giving him extraordinary intuitions, which make him, though harmless as the dove, wise and subtle as the serpent.

But with all his weakness and ignorance, the negro's life is nearer the ideal of the New Testament than our lives. The great law of Love seems engraven on his very nature,—or he had not been a slave for two centuries;—and at the last assize, it may be that the Great Judge will count his warm heart of more worth than our cold intellects. Be that as it may, we know that “whom He loves he chastens,” and that “the light affliction of this present moment works out an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” This being true, there must be a future for the black man,—a future in whose rest

and peace all the unrest and sorrow of this world will be but dimly remembered.

However, all of the Southern negroes are not like old Katy. Thirteen out of every hundred of them are church members, while only nine in the same number of Southern whites profess religion; and this — though church-membership is not an infallible sign of goodness — probably indicates the relative moral worth of the two races. But there are many negroes whose hearts are as black as their skins, and into whose darkened souls no ray of light ever broke from Heaven or from any other region. They seem of a different race from those I have described, and the two have fewer traits in common than the Milesian and the Yankee. One has a short heel, a straight shin, an erect form, a well-shaped head, and a face both open and engaging; the other, a long heel, a shin like a harness-collar, a bent body, a bullet head, and a face that would be no ornament to a baboon or a gorilla.

This class, however, is comparatively small, and will no doubt melt away as soon as emancipation shall have brought it into full competition with the working whites and the more intelligent of its own color. But not so with the superior negroes. They will expand and grow, while the others shrivel and die,

under the light of freedom. The same impressionable nature which opens their souls to the heavenly aura will, now that the gates of knowledge are thrown ajar, open their minds to the influences of civilization; and, ere many years, even their old masters will point to them as model citizens and model Christians, and wonder if they are the same docile drudges who carried their burdens and bore so meekly the stripes they laid upon them.

All experience shows that they are apt to learn, and most receptive of elevating influences. They have not the aggressive character of the Anglo-Saxon, they will not seek to mould other people to their form, or to crush them by their power; but they will twine round the stronger race as the ivy twines round the oak, hiding its rough coat, and covering it with an evergreen beauty.

They have, too, a peculiar power of resistance, which will keep them a distinct people. No other race has ever come in contact with the Anglo-Saxon without being swallowed up or swept away by it as a mountain bridge is swept away by a freshet. But the negro has neither been swallowed up nor swept away. He has lived by the side of the white man for two centuries, and yet to-day has all of the characteristics he brought from his native jungles. This shows that he

can live ; and if he has lived in slavery, then he will live all the longer, and grow all the stronger, in freedom.

If you look again at the various traits I have enumerated as belonging to the negro, you will see that there are among us nearly four millions of people of strong religious sensibilities, fair mental endowments, distinct and marked characteristics, and yet with natures peculiarly docile, teachable, and receptive of civilizing influences. If they are now permitted to live with the white race on terms of political equality, is it difficult to predict their future? Will they not make for themselves a history which, if it be not as brilliant and aggressive as our own, will yet reflect honor and glory on the country, which shall atone for their long night of slavery by a longer day of freedom?

“Robert Lucy” is a representative of the mixed races which, under the names of mulattoes, quadroons, metifs, and octoroons, form an important part of the negro population. What proportion they bear to the whole cannot be stated with any precision ; for there are no entirely reliable statistics. General Hunter, it is said, found among the slaves of St. Helena Island only eight of unmixed African descent in a total of about fifteen hundred. This, however, is an evident

mistake, for not enough white blood to adulterate so large a mass of black material ever came within speaking distance of the entire group of Sea Islands. The census of the whole South gives the ratio of one class to the other as seventeen to a hundred ; but this, doubtless, is another mistake, and another instance of the fallibility of figures. The most casual observer must have noticed that in the large Southern towns the mixed races comprise at least a half of the colored population, and on the smaller plantations not less than a quarter. Making allowance, then, for the larger proportion of pure negroes on the great estates,—where there is too little white blood to very sensibly dilute the darker current,—the total number of the mixed races cannot be far from one fourth of the whole, or one million in a population of four millions.

Admitting this estimate to be tolerably correct, we have a data by which to reckon the time that will be required, providing the process of amalgamation goes on in freedom as it has gone on in slavery, to bleach the entire mass to the complexion of respectable white citizens. If it has taken two hundred years to bring one quarter of the whole to a hue half way between daylight and darkness, it will take six hundred years to reduce the remainder to the

same tawny yellow, and eight hundred more years to give them the florid cuticle of the Anglo-Saxon. Therefore, with the bleaching process in full operation, it will be the year of grace 3300 before all of the negroes are of a color to suit the fastidious taste of those good people who would have them something different from what the Creator intended.

But amalgamation will not go on. Freedom will cause the process to cease altogether. The black has not sought the white, but the white the black ; and nothing but force has made the slave mix his blood with that of his master. If any one doubts this, let him call to mind how the pure negro scorns the one whose lighter skin betrays a white ancestry. This pride of race, which every one at all familiar with the South has noticed, will ever keep the white and black races apart, and make the latter always a separate people.

It is the mixed race which will be absorbed, not by the white, nor yet by the black, but by the law which we see governing most of the hybrids among the brute creation. In His great plan, which reaches across the centuries, they have a part to perform, and when that part is performed they will sink into the earth, as a river sinks into the ocean. Abundant observation has shown, that after three or four generations of breeding

in-and-in, the mulatto becomes enfeebled, and dies out, as the mule dies, stamping his image on none of his species. It is only the infusion of fresh white or black blood that keeps the race alive, and when that stream is diverted by freedom into its natural channel, no hydraulic power known among men can keep the Southern bleachery in operation. It might be well, therefore, to reconcile ourselves at once to the incontestible fact that we shall have on this Continent, for all coming time, a nation of black Americans.

And it is not desirable that the mulatto should live; for, being the offspring, generally, of the ruling whites and the less moral of the blacks, he inherits about as many evil qualities as can be got into six feet of bone and sinew. He has the indolence, pride, treachery, and moral obtuseness of the master, with the servility, craft, cunning, and thieving propensities of the slave. The fervid nature which, in the negro, comes to ecstatic dreams and religious visions, finds vent, in him, in grovelling desire and perfect whirlwinds of insane passion. He is a volcano, smothered under a yellow mould, but every now and then breaking out and scorching the green earth with a deluge of hot ashes and lava. Like the negro, he dreams dreams and sees visions; but they are such visions as

may be supposed to visit the sleepers that tenant the lower regions, not such as come to the cooler brains of honest, well-regulated mortals.

Though of a weak physical frame, the mulatto has all the energy, fire, and intellect of his white ancestry ; and this, and his decided sympathy with the negro, may indicate the part he is to perform in the great plan which is to have its evolution in this New World. It may be that he is to lead his people out of the wilderness, and, like another Joshua, give them a name among the nations. And perhaps when this is done, his work will be over and he will be gathered to his fathers.

It needs no prophet's vision to see that the blind obstinacy of the Southern whites, which denies the negro's manhood, and would keep from him the only pledge of his freedom, may yet rouse a storm, which, to this that has passed, will be as the hurricane to the gentle breeze that softly stirs the meadows. There are blind instincts and terrible impulses in human nature that sometimes burst forth and sweep away all barriers. Such instincts and impulses are now slumbering in the mulatto ; and if justice be not done his race, they may not slumber forever. You cannot evermore throw electricity into a glass bottle ; it will finally burst forth and fill the air with destruction ;

and so the little cloud, at first no bigger than a man's hand, will gather at last, and come down in the lightning. As we look at the sky, do we not see that cloud a-gathering? for is not the South given over to the folly of Pharaoh? God grant that it may not burst; but if it does burst, it will be the mulatto who will guide the storm and ride upon the whirlwind.

Hastily and imperfectly I have now given you what seem to me the prominent characteristics of the leading classes of Southern society. I have shown you four millions of blacks and six millions of whites, trodden on, impoverished, and kept in a greater or less degree of mental and moral darkness by a mere handful of men who have usurped the name of "chivalry," and, with a rod of iron, ruled the South for two centuries. These men are actuated by the very spirit which the God-man spent his life in combating, — the spirit which says to the rest of the world, "Give place, I am holier than thou"; "the clay of which I am formed is of finer mould than the coarse earth of which you are fashioned."

This spirit is the prolific parent of almost all the woes that afflict humanity. It has robbed the poor man of his rights, kept him in ignorance and degradation, and made him a mere hewer of wood and

drawer of water to those who do nothing, produce nothing, and only cumber the ground. It is the born enemy of liberty, equality, and all true progress ; and this nation will not attain to its destiny until it is weeded out of it forever. It has a sickly existence at the North, but it grows rank and wild at the South, among the "chivalry." To uproot it we must disfranchise them, and so strip them forever of the power they have so wickedly abused. Then, and not until then, will they learn, that a man is a man, whatever his race or his color, and that labor is the badge of true nobility, the highest glory of manhood.

THE END.



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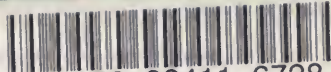
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